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The Times Literary Supplement

January 13 1984 Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX

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Cover picture

"Garden Restaurant" by Herbert Bayer, on show until January 15 at the Photographer's Gallery, 3 and 8 Great Newport Street, W1C 2EX

The philologist as rock-blaster

Robert Bernard Martin

WILLIAM BENZIE
Dr. F. J. Furnivall: Victorian scholar adventurer
302pp. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books.
0937664 57 X

In A. N. Wilson's recent novel *Wise Virgin*, one of the main characters is a middle-aged scholar, Giles Fox, who has forfeited his eyesight and the best part of an unenviable existence to editing an obscure medieval tract on chastity. He is not far from typical of the modern idea of what scholars are like, and the nineteenth century's image of the breed was not so different from ours, if we can judge by Browning's *Grammarian*. It is a pity that F. J. Furnivall, a scholar of a totally different stripe, left no hint of what he thought of the character created by his favourite poet, since we can guess that as a philologist he would have had a quick answer to the lingering linguistic problems posed for the *Grammarian* by "the doctrine of enclitic De", and he would have "settled Hot's business" before lunch. Surely he would have made even shorter work of editing Fox's tract on a subject as alien to him as chastity.

Furnivall was one of those energetic Victorians who at this distance seem more like primal forces than mortals: certainly not our stereotype of editor, philologist or scholar. His brand of buccaneering ruthlessness would have entitled him to a place among Carlyle's Captains of Industry, where only his occupation might have made him odd man out. "One of those great rock-blasting entrepreneurs of Victorian scholarship", John Gross called him, "the kind of man who if his energies had taken another turn might have covered a continent with railways."

For the Early English Text Society alone, Furnivall edited thirty-nine volumes, and they were undertaken in his spare time when he was not practising at the bar, teaching at the Working Men's College, serving as secretary to the Philological Society, acting as editor and coordinator of *The New English Dictionary* (to which he contributed some 30,000 exemplary quotations culled from his reading), founding and directing seven literary societies, walking, boxing, cycling, dancing, still sculling fourteen miles on Sundays after he was eighty and much more frequently when he was younger, working for women's suffrage, speaking without notes at endless meetings, holding forth at daily literary lectures in the ABC tearoom nearest the British Museum, or employing the vigour of ten in his favourite of all recreations: wrangling with other scholars. Half-a-dozen different friends have left their memories of his delight, when sculling, in arriving at a lock where there was already a queue of boats waiting their turn. Pushing them out of the way with a murderously waving boat-hook, he would triumphantly force his way through, so that he could be first out the other side. It is a precise emblem of his way with other scholars. Obviously a personality very tempting for a biographer, in spite of the difficulties of dealing with such diverse activities.

Like so many of the nineteenth-century human dynamos, Furnivall was born into a strongly Evangelical family and all his life maintained the fervour of his childhood, long after discarding the beliefs that had originally inspired it. His father was a pious and successful doctor who, besides his usual practice, ran a private lunatic asylum that is said to have been worth £200,000 by the time he died, which made it easier for his son to follow the life he had chosen. Young Furnivall's theological beliefs in perfectibility was easily changed to creeds in the future of a revitalized England growing from the roots of the past (once he had made those roots better understood); his doctrine of work survived almost unchanged; even Shelley observance remained such a dominant belief in his life that he was tireless in urging on young people their moral duty to mark the Sabbath by going into the open air and enjoying themselves, and he once jawed an audience of persons on the "waste of life" it was "to spend it in church listening to 'outworn dogma'".

When he was a young barrister he taught English literature at the Working Men's College as part of the grand scheme to promote cooperation between the social classes by mixing gentlemen and "snobs" with no more regard to rank than was absolutely necessary. Like some of the other Christian Socialists, he was more egalitarian in theory than in practice, since he had an autocratic streak that prevented him from being happy when anyone else was in the chairman's seat. For him education normally meant bringing the working men nearer his own level rather than any learning from each other. But none of that kept him from being genuinely concerned to use the study of English as the most easily available means of raising the intellectual consciousness of the uneducated masses.

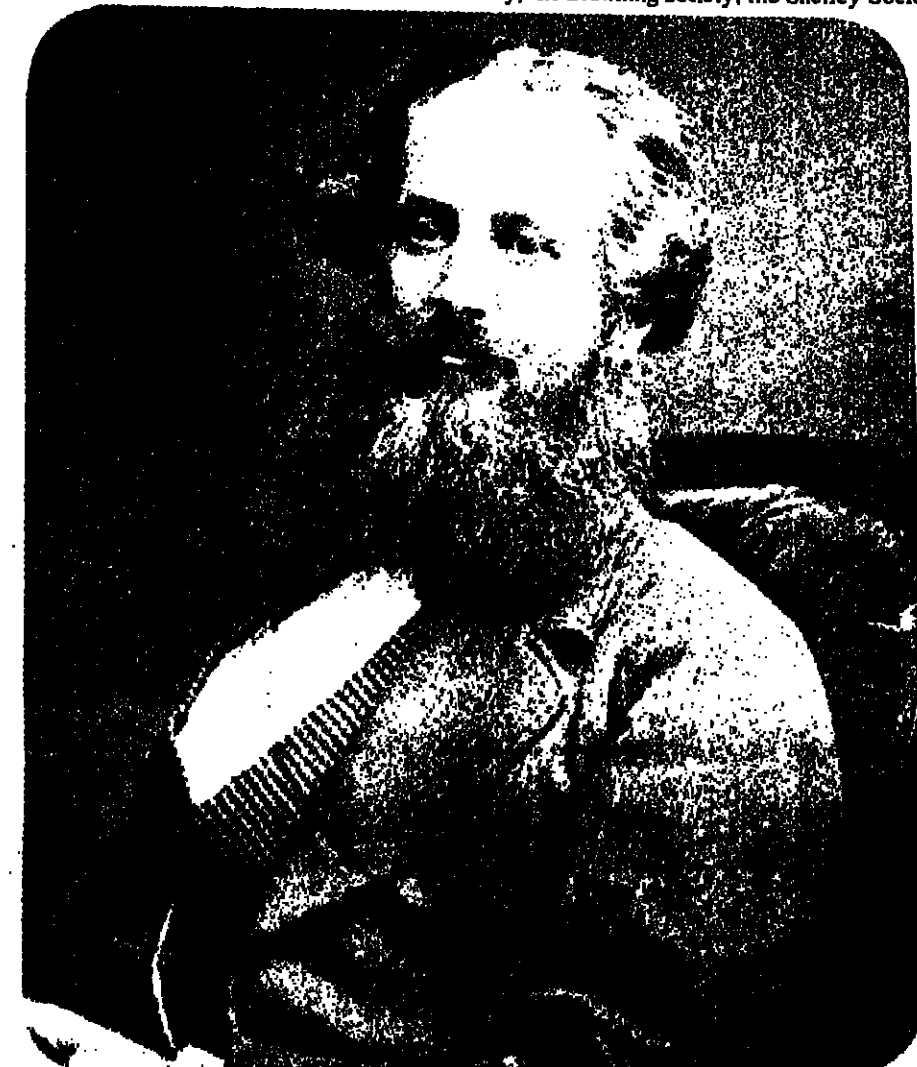
If Furnivall felt little zeal for exactness in English literature at the Working Men's College as part of the grand scheme to promote cooperation between the social classes by mixing gentlemen and "snobs" with no more regard to rank than was absolutely necessary. Like some of the other Christian Socialists, he was more egalitarian in theory than in practice, since he had an autocratic streak that prevented him from being happy when anyone else was in the chairman's seat. For him education normally meant bringing the working men nearer his own level rather than any learning from each other. But none of that kept him from being genuinely concerned to use the study of English as the most easily available means of raising the intellectual consciousness of the uneducated masses.

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If Furnivall felt little zeal for exactness in

The New English Dictionary. The story of the *Dictionary* has been told before, but it is good to be reminded of it, recounted this time from the viewpoint of Furnivall, who for a time served as chief editor. He was amazingly fertile in ideas to keep the immense project from dying of its own size: he devised the system of "volunteer" contributors, coordinated their findings, and first hit upon the idea of the *Concise Dictionary* as an abstract of the greater work. Without his ginger the whole project might have died before birth.

After the foundation of the Early English Text Society, Furnivall's sense of urgency, at least as it is described here, naturally slackened as he successively founded the Ballad Society, the Chaucer Society, the New Shakespeare Society, the Browning Society, the Shelley Society



philology or editing, it was because he never regarded either discipline as an end in itself. He thought of the *New English Dictionary* as chiefly a record of English civilization told in terms of its language, and he regarded the Early English Text Society as a way of providing literary artifacts to connect Victorians with the daily life and heroic aspirations of their ancestors. "I never cared a bit for philology", he once confessed: "my chief aim has been throughout to illustrate the social condition of the English people in the past."

During Furnivall's lifetime there was a faint stirring of guilt in the universities that they were ignoring English literature, although their more conservative members still pointed out that any decently educated man with a training in the classics needed no instruction in the literature of his own country. Greek or Latin, yes, but English never. As Stephen Potter observed in *The Muse in Chains*, "The one way in which a text-trained Oxford might be got to think seriously about official acceptance of English literature was the way of Philology, of old English; it would obviously ease matters if English could be made to look like a dead language." Dead languages need texts to explicate and analyse; men like Furnivall interested in understanding the national heritage wanted records made available of the glorious past. It was a happy convergence of totally different premises leading to the same conclusion, and the result was the wonderful efflorescence of textual and linguistic studies in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In 1858, as a result of the report of its "Unregistered Words Committee", of which Furnivall was a leading member, the Philological Society resolved to jettison the initial proposal of a supplement to existing dictionaries, and to create instead the whole new work that became

and the Wyclif Society. His family of societies, as he liked to call them, seem a little incestuous as one is bred from another. William Benzie, who is sober enough elsewhere, is amusing about the Browning Society, not least about its rival branches in Newnham and Girton at Cambridge. At Newnham the young ladies stuffed the poet with tea and muffins, then crowned him with a wreath of pink roses. The Girton society, a more practical lot, liquidated their assets after only four years and used them to buy chocolates.

It is one of the ironies of Furnivall's efforts that the edition of Old English and medieval texts, which he thought of as a step in the democratization of education, became the enclave of the most specialized experts in all English studies. As generations of undergraduates later found out, the initial hurdle in English was linguistic, and even when they at last went on to more literary studies, the emphasis was on "indebtedness" to older models, a way of thought that led Leslie Stephen to remark sensibly: "You can admire a girl without having to find out first whether or not she got her looks from her grandmother." The great shaggy, unruly works of genius were too often left behind if they were not susceptible to construing, explanation, or detailed genealogy. Since then, somewhere along the line, English literature became Eng Lit, and the cultural continuity that Furnivall sought from it has constantly become narrower, so that what distinguishes many critics today is not what they have learned from literature but their methods of speaking about it.

Furnivall was less palatable in his work than he demanded that others be, but at least he was frank in acknowledging his short-cuts. To one volume he prefaced the breezy warning: "The Notes, foot and end, are not so full as

I could have wished; but I had not time to fish for more." In another collection he gave due notice of possible deficiencies: "Of the pieces now issued some have been printed elsewhere, and of most, perhaps better texts exist; but the time that it takes to ascertain whether a poem has been printed or not, which is the best MS. of it, in which points the versions differ, etc., etc., is so great, that after some experience I find the shortest way for a man engaged in other work, but wishing to give some time to the Society, is to ... print whatever he either does not know, or cannot get at easily leaving others with more leisure to print the best texts. He wants some text, and that at once." (How eloquent of his methods "etc., etc." is.)

His qualifications for philology were even sketchier than for editing, one otherwise admiring co-worker wrote, since he could not so much as conjugate an Anglo-Saxon verb. His criticism was too often based on inadequate readings. When reviewing an edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* he mistook Johnson's preface for a new one by R. G. Latham and complained bitterly that "Dr. Johnson had altogether disappeared" from it. He was negligent, too, about the preparation of the editors whom he asked to undertake work for the Early English Text Society, reckoning that they could easily repair any deficiencies in their background, precisely as he was accustomed to doing himself. One man he invited to edit a medieval Latin manuscript is said never to have read a page of medieval Latin in his life nor even to have handled a manuscript, but he was so mesmerized by Furnivall that he accepted.

His way with adverse criticism was brusque: "To those critics who have objected to the length of my Introductions ... I have only to say that I believe I understand my own business better than they do." When the *Pall Mall Gazette* printed an unfavourable account of one of his works, he replied with a letter in its columns describing the reviewer as a liar and "base beast" no longer fit for the society of decent men and women. As the chairman of a meeting he seldom allowed discussion to continue if he disagreed with it; when a member of the Sculling Club objected that his remarks were illogical, Furnivall cut off further talk by saying simply, "Oh! damn your logic." Professor Benzie takes Furnivall at his word when he describes his intimacy with great Victorian writers, but it is not surprising that their private correspondence often gives him the lie, saying how much they disliked him and his truculence. The truth is that his brashness, his impatience and his obstinacy, grating though they were on others, were the very qualities that allowed him to accomplish as much as he did. Good temper has not always characterized English studies.

His biographer refrains from mentioning it overtly, but Furnivall's titanic energy elsewhere was linked to a strong sexual drive. He had a catholic admiration for young women of all conditions ("Woman is the beauty and glory of the world") but was most enthusiastic about working-class girls, a preference that was connected with his admirable fight for female emancipation and education, and which may have accounted as well for his friendship with A. J. Munby, that extraordinary connoisseur of the charms of women labourers. When he was thirty-seven Furnivall married the daughter of a market gardener, a pretty young woman half his age with whom he had lived openly for some time. When he was nearly sixty he gave new cause for scandal by bringing his current mistress, his twenty-one-year-old secretary, to live in the family house, which she shared with his wife until Mrs Furnivall moved out with her son. In John Munro's memoir, published the year after Furnivall's death in 1910, nearly half of the reminiscences contributed by friends are written by women, many of them clearly not well educated, although they are all admiring, not to say adoring. Even as an old man his manner with young women was flirtatious. He was well over seventy when he founded the Furnivall Sculling Club for Girls (he later admitted young men, to move the boats around); he insisted on acting as cox to eight young women wearing the costumes he had specified for them - sailor hats, light loose blouses and serge skirts. The amusement the Sculling Club aroused in his contemporaries

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was surely occasioned in part by envy of the amatory interests that still drove him at four-score.

So far as most other sensual pleasures went, Furnivall was loyal to the strictness of his upbringing, for he never smoked and he said that he had not touched alcohol since he was fourteen. His idea of splendid picnic fare was stewed gooseberries and ginger-beer. Even at "the A.B.C. - Aerated Bread Company's Shop, 66 New Oxford Street, first floor, at 4 o'clock" to which he issued invitations broadcast, to scholars visiting the British Museum, he maintained his austere diet. One of the waitresses who reverentially served him remembered that "He was very plain with his food, merely ordering very weak coffee, rusks and butter. We always took the same to him, very rarely asking him if he would like a change." To disciples who were leaving him to take up teaching positions, his invariable admonition was to give their pupils plenty of tea. His must surely be one of the few literary coteries of the past two centuries nurtured on currant buns rather than alcohol. During hot summers he would invite groups of his waitresses for an Aerated picnic on the river. He regularly brought them bunches of violets, and twice a year he left a parcel for each, "which on being opened was found to contain two pairs of stockings", a gift so socially outrageous at the beginning of this century that it must have

made his manic old eyes sparkle.

This biography is sometimes as slapdash as Furnivall's own work. For example, the author has given a new gustatory name to ornithology, the "corncake", a spelling he uses at least four times, even though the source from which he took it unambiguously prints "cornflake". And since the sub-title of this book is borrowed from *The Scholar Adventurers*, by a distinguished scholar, it seems ungrateful to refer to Professor Allick as "George" on occasion rather than by his given name, Richard.

Benzie's Preface says that he had no intention of treating Furnivall "as merely another Victorian eccentric", since he was writing a critical biography. It isn't quite that, for there is almost no integration of personality and achievement; the result is that Furnivall seems even more eccentric than he was because we never see what held him together. Thirty pages of "Life and Career" are followed by separate treatments of Furnivall as Christian Socialist, philologist and founder of literary societies. A twenty-page conclusion bulges with information that did not fit the preceding chapters neatly, and then we have a chronological table of Furnivall's life. So many partial retellings of the same story make for a bumpy read, but they probably reflect the difficulty of seeing Furnivall as a whole. If we can follow the muddling chronology, this is a Life well worth consideration.

Waiting for the Lexicographer

All urge and no style,
this slabby lingo
sounds like a snapped poplar
in his prepuce chirping
or her palm again -
It's liquid and plosive
like fish pong, perhaps,
or that fountain teacher
whose speech was half-codding,
'First master the language
and then mind who owns it;
the day you rhyme full
with that overworked dull
I'll have a go at your books.'

TOM PAULIN

A breath of Barsetshire

John Adlard

ANDREW WRIGHT
Anthony Trollope: Dream and Art
173pp, Macmillan, £20.
0 333 34593 2

Barsetshire, we are told in *Framley Parsonage*, "taken altogether, is a pleasant green tree-bordered county", but a section of it is "bleak and ugly". The adjoining county is bleak and ugly, too. Forty years ago the Barset novels soothed war-weary English men and women on slow, blacked-out railway journeys; they are still, of course, read for pure nostalgia, but Andrew Wright, paying his respects to four decades of British and American scholarship, knows that to look in Trollope for a "novelist of evocation, summing up a golden age", is "to misconceive his intention and to underestimate his achievement".

This achievement, he reminds us, is many-faceted. There is Trollope the moralist, our contemporary (there is Trollope the witness - reliable for the greater part - of mid-Victorian manners. Wright's own subject, in this intelligent and readable book, is "Trollope the dreamer, who made of the nightmares of the waking life of his boyhood and youth compensatory fictions that have an importance independent of overt moral recommendation and independent also of representation of Victorian actuality, even as that actuality may be associated with modern circumstances". He devotes a chapter to what he said and what is left unsaid in the *Autobiography*, where the fastidious Trollope set down all his wretched

ness at school, at home, and as a raw employee at the Post Office in St Martin's-le-Grand. In these dismal years he was "always going around with some castle in the air" dominating his thoughts. These were more than mere castles in the air; they became tales, carefully worked upon, with himself, "of course", as hero. Wright recognizes the importance of this reminiscence to our understanding of the formation of Trollope as a novelist; the strength of that impulse to fantasy carried him through a long, industrious career, and he benefited, too, from an early determination to confine his fantasies to the credible.

The introduction and the chapter on the *Autobiography* are followed by a series of separate analyses of the *Chronicles of Barsetshire*, the Palliser novels and five other novels, a series which takes up practically two thirds of the book. The analyses are excellent, but the succession of plot-summaries and character-outlines transforms the work suddenly into a kind of Companion to Trollope, and there is not really sufficient connection between those analyses and either the chapters before them or the brief epilogue by which they are followed. In this epilogue Wright has little to add to what he has said already; he occasionally repeats himself, offering us again the opinion of L. S. Amery on Trollope and politics, disapproving still on "domestic dreams" "transfigured in his art". But it is good to see him rebuking Raymond Williams for making an "unreasonable demand" on a comic novel like *Doctor Thorne*, and agreeing wholeheartedly with George Eliot that Trollope's books "are like pleasant public gardens, where people go for amusement and, whether they think it or not, get health as well".

Best of British

A. O. J. Cockshut

JOHN CANNING (Editor)
100 Great Nineteenth-Century Lives
601pp, Methuen, £12.50.
0 413 51520 6

All compilations by many hands are likely to be uneven; this one is much more uneven than most, for at least three reasons. The first is the editor's simple, sweeping view of life, which he manages to convey very well in a two-page general introduction. He tells us that the study of nineteenth-century biographies has aroused in him three main conclusions, that genius is unpredictable, that mothers are much more important in the lives of the great than fathers, and that one figure, that of Napoleon, bestrides the whole age, "like a Colossus". The first thesis may fairly be said to be borne out by the text that follows, the other two only in a few cases, and often not at all. It naturally follows that a simple-minded scheme applied indiscriminately to 100 people will be like a shapeless suit of clothes and fit where it touches. Talleyrand and Metternich would no doubt have experienced life very differently if Napoleon had not crossed their paths, but can the same possibly be said of Keats or Josephine Butler or Cézanne or Sir Henry Irving?

The second cause of unevenness is the editor's extreme (though perhaps quite unconscious) nationalism in his choice of subjects. Two intelligible policies are open to the editor of a work such as this. He can restrict it to Britain, or perhaps to those who spoke the English language; or he can make it universal. What he should not do is to follow the first policy most of the time, while making uneasy gestures towards the second. A few figures will show the extent to which this has been done. In the section "Writers and Poets" (in itself an odd and illogical phrase) there are twenty-three names, of whom fourteen wrote in English. The book should happen to cross the Channel, one can easily imagine the assessment that will greet the news that, for some people in England, Samuel Smiles, Ann Brontë and Oscar Wilde are of more importance than Goethe, Manzoni and Baudelaire. And we may doubt whether the surprising presence of Jules Verne will be felt as an adequate counterweight. In the shorter section entitled "Religious Leaders and Thinkers" five out of eight wrote in English, and among "Reformers and Innovators" thirteen out of fourteen. Only among "Composers, Artists and Artists" does a returning gleam of proportion allow the continentals a comfortable majority. Lurking behind this is a view of England not far from Mr Podsnip's. Foreigners, we regret to say, do as they do. We are religious, thrifty, inventive, liberal-minded, progressive and, above all, rich. Foreigners may be artistic and musical, but are on the whole idle, unproductive, papistical and have never thought how to grand it is to wake up each morning with the idea that "one day I shall be the head of this firm".

The third reason for unevenness lies in the haphazard method of choosing contributors. Some of them are both distinguished and expert, like Asa Briggs, who writes on Samuel Smiles and John Bright, or C. J. Carter, who contributes an admirably vivid and concise sketch of Benjamin Jowett. Others have been chosen almost at random from people who are not informed about the subject which they are writing. For instance the person who wrote: "He [Disraeli] missed the movement of public school... possibly because, as a mother thought that... boys were being reared in a serious student of Winchester... a hardly have been a serious student of Winchester... wrote in the style of Sterne, or that Thackeray's *Amelia* (in *Vanity Fair*) was written in the portrait of Jane Brockfield. The writer who died seems not to have read his biography, or learnt of the reason, his crippling childhood, and who will not allow themselves to be well advised to look closely at the many and varied reputation of each contributor, and approach warily the work of those previously unknown to them.

The birth of Eng Lit

John Lucas

CHRIS BALDICK
The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932
250pp, Oxford: Clarendon Press, £19.50.
0 191 28121 5
RAYMOND WILLIAMS
Writing in Society
271pp, Verso/New Left Books, £18.50
(paperback, £5.95).
0 860 91 072 5

One of the pieces in *Writing in Society*, Raymond Williams' latest collection of essays, reviews and lectures, is called "Crisis in English Studies". Originally a lecture, its starting point is Williams' intervention in what became known as the MacCabe affair. By an inevitable irony of history, those who had been the beleaguered innovators of English studies at Cambridge in the 1920s and 30s were now appealed to as the guardians of a tradition whose timeless centrality and rightness could be taken for granted. But traditions have their starting points and their histories; and this is what Chris Baldick's book, *The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932*, is about. How did English studies come to exist? When? Why? Dr Baldick's carefully-plotted account begins, as it must, with Matthew Arnold. It then works forward, through the promoting of English studies at Oxbridge, the work of Eliot and Richards, to the Leavisites and the founding of *Scrutiny*. Much of the material is familiar, but Baldick handles it with good sense; and the ways in which English Studies became institutionalized at all levels seems to me to be documented in an exemplary manner.

A point of major importance is just how closely the rise of English studies was tied, often openly, to political considerations. While some of us never doubted that this was so, it is good to have the matter so neatly spelt out. For example, Baldick has some very interesting pages on the work of the committee which Lloyd George set up after the end of the First World War - its chairman was Sir Henry Newbolt - whose aim was to "propose rebuilding an entire 'arch' of national education round the 'keystone' of English". Such education mattered, not only because it made for better soldiers, but because it could resolve class-hostilities. According to the report:

Literature... seems to be classed by a large number of thinking working men with antiques, fish and other unintelligible and futile trifles of "middle-class culture" and, as a subject for instruction, is suspect as an attempt to sidetrack the working-class movement. We regard the prevalence of such opinions as a serious matter, not merely because it means the alienation of an important sector of the population from the "comfort" and "refinement" of literature, but chiefly because it points to a world condition in the body politic which if not taken in hand may be followed by lamentable consequences.

Professors of English literature in the modern universities therefore became "ambassadors" or "missionaries" sent out into "every important capital of industrialism in the country". They have an obligation not merely to their students but "still more towards the teeming population outside the university walls, most of whom have not so much 'heard' whether there be any Holy Ghost". Hence the extension lecture, Adult Education, the introduction at home and abroad (ie, empire) of examination syllabuses in English in schools, colleges and universities.

If it seems messianic, we need to remember that from the beginning - that is from Matthew Arnold - the study of literature was of a kind that was to be a stay-against political and cultural anarchy. For Arnold took the purpose of the best that has been thought and written: its function was disinterestedly to put all would-be literature at the bar of approved wisdom - to judge it by timeless or universal standards. Criticism makes culture prevail; and culture is both a means to, and an expression of, peace, balance. Moreover, it is to be served and brought to bear only by those who abstain from practical matters and who will not allow themselves to be "blackened by the smoke of the mill". Thus spring the *Allegory*, the results from all classes, who somehow belong to none, who are therefore culture's only true ambassadors; and who in due time mutate into professors of literature at provincial universities or into the "essential Cambridge" of the Leavisites' formulation.

There is, of course, an unstated problem in all this, which at times lurches into plain contradictoriness. (I leave aside the question of who decides what is wisdom). On the one hand, culture as class-dissolvent or agent of reconciliation will save us all; on the other, for Arnold and Leavis at least, only a few may profit from it or have access to it. Mass civilization and minority culture are implacably opposed. Arnold, with his appeal not merely to the classic spirit but to the literary heritage of Greece and Rome, accepts that culture is denied to most of his contemporaries. As for Leavis, "it must be obvious" that only a few can benefit from the study of literature. Still, the literature he had in mind was by no means the same as Arnold's, and here I think Baldick's narrative won't do.

When did the study of literature become the study of English literature? Baldick suggests that the change is post-First World War. Patriotic pride plus contempt for all things German meant that Teutonic scholarship, and especially philology, could be dismissed. In its place came the study of the classics of English literature. And such study could be protected from the sneer of "soft option" because of "practical criticism". This brainchild of I. A. Richards was both rigorous and "objective"; and it had the additional advantage of offering itself as yet another saviour of mankind. In Baldick's words, "for Richards, literary critics, and possibly a further small layer of discerning readers, are the most valuable people in society". If students cannot respond adequately to poems, Richards asks, "How far can we expect such readers to show themselves intelligent, imaginative and discriminating in their intimate relations with other human beings?" The implied answer is, not at all.

What Baldick has to say here is true as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. In particular, it doesn't go far enough back. The invention of "English literature" happened well before the First World War. It is surely inseparable from that whole extraordinary enterprise of discovering and affirming "Englishness" which is so marked a feature of the period 1880-1914? *The Mermals and English Men of Letters* and many other series: these may be linked, no matter how loosely, with journals such as *Merry England*, for the first number of which in 1881 George Saintsbury wrote an essay on "Young England", with the Anglo-Saxony of the 1890s, with Alfred Austin's vision of a nation "joyous" with lords and contented peasantry, with Kipling's Hobden the

Hedger, Cecil Sharp's pursuit of folksong, with Margaret Schlegel's looking out from Howards End and attempting "to realize England"; and much, much more besides. I would say that it is only when you realize how all-pervading this preoccupation with realizing England is that you can understand why Leavis should place his faith in the organic community, of which he makes so much in *For Continuity*.

I disagree sharply with Baldick when he says that the war created a sense of patriotic pride. The truth is rather that as it went on it made such pride far more difficult to hold by. More important, the war seemed to create an almost unbridgeable gulf between past and present. The only way to restore or safeguard continuity was by throwing a ladder across to the presumed Englishness of English literature which had been discovered and made into an orthodoxy in the pre-war period: "The memory of the old order, the old ways of life, must be the chief hint for, the directing incitement towards, a new, if ever there is to be a new. It is the memory of a human normality of naturalness..."

It is in the light of terms such as these - they come from *For Continuity* - that we can understand why Leavis should be so conservative when it comes to establishing his canon of English literature. In a curiously evasive passage Baldick remarks that "The First World War has long been recognised as marking a distinct turning-point not only in world history but also in English literature, giving rise to the literary renaissance headed by Joyce, Eliot, and Lawrence. What is less often observed is the fact that the discipline which has arrived at this assessment - English literary criticism - owes its own renaissance largely to the same catastrophe". But surely the most persuasive version of English literary criticism is Leavis's, and of the three names Baldick cites as key figures in the literary renaissance Leavis allows only Lawrence unambiguously to pass. The reason is plain enough. Eliot and Joyce are not English and neither is rooted in place. By contrast, "Lawrence always lived on the spot where he was. That was his genius". Leavis spells the matter out beyond any doubt in words that Baldick quotes: "It was in the past that [Lawrence] was rooted. Indeed, in our time, when the gap in continuity is almost complete, he may be said to represent, concretely in his living person, the essential human tradition". For Leavis, the great tradition must be a narrow one, because, so his largely mythic reading of history insists, not many writers can be identified in terms of the organic community, and not all of those are alive to their responsibility to speak out for "human naturalness".

There is a further point. Baldick is very good at noting the underlying politics of the rise of

English Studies. What he doesn't do - perhaps he felt it to be beyond his brief - is examine how this had inevitable consequences for the establishing of the canon and the way in which it was taught. As we would expect, these are matters which Raymond Williams takes up. In "Cambridge English, Past and Present", he notes drily that students were supposed to know "the poets of our own land", but then not Taliesin or Dafydd ap Gwilym. "Of our own people" but then not the author of *Beowulf*. "Elsewhere syllabuses may vary, the canon may shrink or expand a little; but the major point is that whether you rely on "close reading" or choose to "survey the field", start with Chaucer or Shakespeare and end with Tennyson or Brian Patten, English studies are a means of sustaining or betraying ideological positions. This is not to be avoided. The problem has been to get it acknowledged. Baldick quotes an interesting piece by H. G. Robinson, in which Robinson remarks that

If anything will take the coarseness and vulgarity out of a soul, it must be refined images and elevated sentiments. As a clown will instinctively tread lightly and feel ashamed in a lady's boudoir, so a vulgar mind may, by converse with minds of high culture, be brought to see and deplore the contrast between itself and them, and to make an earnest effort to put off its vulgarity.

That was written in 1860. Over a hundred years later, Robinson's untroubled sense that he knew what high culture was is alive and well. "The test of a gentleman", a senior Shakespearean editor once said to me, "is his ability to enjoy Scott." It took a long time to get Blake, Dickens and Lawrence into the canon. Clare is still not there. One of the major complaints I have against literary critics of the left is that they simply haven't done enough to revise or to capture the canon, and I think that a reason for this may be their fear of what Tom Paulin has called "a formal joy". The formal delights of literature are what the left is inevitably liable to run scared of; the result can be to persuade you that you ought to prefer punk to Pope. Raymond Williams has been and continues to be a great intellectual force; and as the essay "Notes on English Prose" shows, he can also be a perceptive critic. But not of poetry. And it is unfortunately the case that with very few exceptions the best Marxist critics are always much happier dealing with prose than with poetry. Perhaps this is because of the embarrassing matter of form, perhaps because poetry is thought to be too readily identified with "refined images and elevated sentiments". But studying the semiotics of bus-tickets is no substitute for studying Milton's handling of caesura. We ought not to leave the enemy so much.

On familiar ground

Phillip Larkin

JOSEPH EPSTEIN
The Middle of My Tether
250pp, W. W. Norton, \$14.95.
0 393 01772 9

Perhaps because I've never been there, I think of America as an old-fashioned place where you salute the flag, stand up when a lady comes in, and call your father Sir. This may resemble the Muscovite conviction that London is perpetually enveloped in thick fog and the surrounding countryside full of fox-hunters and starving peasantry, but equally I suspect there is an awful lot of historical coexistence in America; in the sense that the past takes a long while to be over. And here is Joseph Epstein writing a book of essays to prove it.

I say that because in England the essay, as a literary form, is pretty well extinct. It belonged to an age when reading - reading almost anything - was the principal entertainment of the educated class; this called for a plethora of dailies, weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies, all of them to be filled. And what filled them, a lot of the time, was essays - not critical essays, or polemical essays, but what Mr Epstein calls "familiar essays": on not going to the movies any more, on forgetfulness, on books and their

many properties, on letters one gets and the letters one would like to get. Of course we have Mr Levin and Mr Hatterley, but I doubt if they are pure essayists; Mr Levin is always liable to tell us what he thinks, and Mr Hatterley who he is: Cyril Connolly fathered the genre on Addison, and was rather dismissive about him: "He was the apologist for the New Bourgeoisie who writes playfully and apologetically about nothing, casting a smoke screen over its activities to make it seem harmless, genial and sensitive in its non-acquisitive moments". The typical opening was something like "If it be a sin to be half in love with the old days, then I must aver..."

On the face of it, Epstein is nothing like this. Watching a double feature of *Strap Dogs* and *The Wild Ones* "has all the allure of riding a whiplash roller coaster after having been in a spaghetti-eating contest"; the task of banishing clichés from our thought and language "resembles cleaning out the Augean stables without removing the horses". He quotes a bewildering range of authors, including Amis, Menckon and James Agate. But underneath there are remarkable similarities. He tells us about his love of, say, mania for fountain pens ("meanwhile I am building up quite a nice arsenal... I have the little dears on my desk before me. Let me take an inventory..."). He is addicted to juggling ("No self-

improvement, no end other than itself, sheer play, exquisitely useless"). He ruminates on faces ("I have been told by different people at different times that I resemble... the actors Sal Mineo, Russ Tamblyn and Kent Barry, the scholar Walter Kaufmann, the assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, and a now-deceased Yorkshire terrier called Max"). This is well in the Addisonian line of succession that Connolly saw petering out in *Punch* and the professional humorists.

Epstein is a great deal more sophisticated than they were, and a great deal more readable. His subjects are tossed up, turned round, stuck with quotations, abandoned and returned to, playfully inverted, and finally set back on their feet, as is the reader, a little breathless but quite unharmed. But it is essentially a merry-go-round, not a view to a death. Why has it started up again in America? Can there still be legions of prairie-surrounded televisionless, with nothing to do in the long evenings but read under the oil-lamp by a hot stove? Perhaps it hasn't. The small print tells us that these pieces first appeared in an amiable quarterly named *The American Scholar* (under the pseudonym, if my memory serves me, of Aristides). Mr Epstein is editor of *The American Scholar*. The situation would seem to be one of supply rather than demand.

For solo singers

M. L. West

ANNE PIPPIN BURNETT
Three Archaic Poets: Archilochus, Alcaeus,
Sappho
320pp. Duckworth. £24.
07156 16943

The term "archaic", as applied to that phase of Greek civilization which corresponds roughly to the seventh and sixth centuries BC, is too firmly established now to be dislodged. But it has become increasingly incongruous as more knowledge has been gained of much earlier periods; and it seems especially unsuitable for the highly mature and flexible poetry of that time, which can stand comparison with that of any later epoch. It has survived for the most part only in fragments, something over 2,500 of them. That is enough to give us some impression of a handful of major poets, but the fact that they are only a handful hinders their proper assessment. One pops up in one part of Greece, another in another part a couple of decades later, and though our eyes will tend to join up the blobs with lines (like the *canali* that Schiaparelli saw on Mars), we cannot make out the reality of the landscape, the network of local traditions in which each poet had his being. The exceptional case of Alcaeus and Sappho, two poets from the same time and place, permits some limited generalization about Lesbian song. But with Archilochus the question of how much to ascribe to local convention is acute. Comparisons with other writers of *iambos* expose rather than solve the problem.

As her concentration on three poets indicates, Anne Pippin Burnett is less interested in an overall view of the literary scene than in personalities considered on their own. But she inevitably makes some general assumptions. She has a perhaps rather romantic belief in a stratum of ancient popular work, play, and cult songs underlying the development of archaic monody. She sees the symposium as the principal setting for solo song, rightly, but she warns against the reconstruction of specific situations from poems, arguing that they would not have been preserved if they had not been intended for repeated performances. Certainly many of them will have been sung and resung, but the argument from preservation is dubious: what about Pindar's victory odes? Can we really detach apparent from actual occasion to the extent of asserting that "Alcaeus could stand at ease among banqueting companions while he sang of a self who skulked in exile", or that he "quite possibly... addressed his friends within a single hour, now as a perfect company of gentlemen, now as a conjuration given over to treachery and internal intrigue"?

Mrs Burnett aims to treat the work of these poets "as poems that happen to come from antiquity, not as antique texts that happen to be poetry". She is, of course, too good a scholar not to appreciate that what they meant to their original hearers is to be distinguished from what they might mean to the modern reader, and is the proper object of inquiry. In other words interpretation must be a scholarly process involving the investigation of word associations, conventional themes, and so on. This is what occupies the bulk of the book. All the major fragments are quoted in Greek and translated, usually in a way that is quite correct. (Two pages of interpretation of a piece of Alcaeus are vitiated by the assumption that the poet "never could mean 'fortress'".) There is much detailed reference to modern scholarly discussion, and much spirited criticism of it.

Mrs Burnett's own discussions are refreshingly independent and at the same time sensible. Often, indeed, they are highly sensitive and illuminating. I pick out especially her broad interpretation of the song of Sappho in which "Anchore" is mentioned in a "faint shade" in an idyllic grove. She has a talent for eliciting a whole independent string of associations and ideas from a few lines of verse. In her zeal for exploring them, however, she sometimes seems dangerously late evidence. For example, in discussing the extended simile in which Sappho compares an absent friend to the moon, she cites a body of "ancient" beliefs about the moon, not all of which can plausibly be attributed to the age of Sappho. Even where

none of the suggested associations is anachronistic, it is another question whether they are all simultaneously valid. Surely Sappho may say she is paler than grass without any hint that she will get her colour back in another season.

It is particularly with Sappho that Mrs Burnett tends to overplay her hand. Fifteen pages on a song of seven stanzas: two pages on its first word, half a page on the first half of the first word. It is a sparkling performance, but one feels that a briefer exposition might have done equal justice to these not very difficult poems. There is a danger of the reader's senses being dulled by abundance to the most important of the points being made.

What positions did these poets occupy in their societies? The answer is clearest in the case of Alcaeus. He belonged to an old-established but not very popular family, battling for its life in turbulent times with only intermittent success. The battles were sometimes physical; but it is misleading to portray Alcaeus' comrades as a band "whose hereditary profession was war" and who "drank together by night because they fought together by day". Fighting was an occasional excitement, not a nine-to-five, round-the-year job. Archilochus, too, seems to have been a prominent man in his city, even if the evidence hardly justifies calling him "a powerful noble". As for Sappho, she must have been a woman of some standing in Mytilene, though her world did not overlap with Alcaeus'. Mrs Burnett accepts the view that she presided over a kind of boarding-school, where girls were prepared for marriage by instruction in music - "the music that would touch their new lives with elegance and harmony" - and by initiation in the mysteries of love and the beauty revealed by love. This carefree homosexual love, however, "untouched by the notions of shame, corruption, birth and eventual death that mark the sexual actions of women with men", is not seen as a preparation for conjugal relations but as a private ideal for the girls to hang on to in their distant, altered lives. Sappho's verse no doubt gives a somewhat selective picture of the life of her group. But whether it was a finishing-school or something else, they do seem to have had quite a nice set-up, and it loses nothing by Mrs Burnett's voluptuous writing. There is much to enjoy and admire in the book. Future interpreters of these three poets will have to pay it a good deal of attention.

Difficult neighbours

P. J. Rhodes

SIMON HORNBLOWER
The Greek World 479-323 BC
354pp. Methuen. £13.95 (paperback, £5.95).
0416 749909

Five volumes of Methuen's "History of the Greek and Roman World" were published in the 1930s, and a sixth in the 1940s; the first volume, on Greece before 479 BC, never appeared. Intermediate between the *Cambridge Ancient History* and single-volume histories, the series has been a faithful standby for generations of students. Now a new Methuen series "Classical Civilizations" is to be published under the editorship of Fergus Millar. Simon Hornblower's book inaugurates it. In the previous series Greece from 479 to 323 BC was entrusted to M. L. W. Laistner, he produced 327 pages of straightforward narrative, and 142 pages on topics such as warfare, government, literature and religion. In a florid formal style with a few footnotes, four pages on the sources, and six of modern bibliography, Hornblower has given in 292 pages a single, integrated account which follows separate regional threads to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War and weaves them together thereafter, with one chapter after the Peloponnesian War on topics to which justice could not be done within the narrative framework; the style is a good deal more conversational than that of fifty years ago; the sources are introduced in the first chapter and are cited more generously than by Laistner; there are twenty-nine pages of endnotes and four of critical bibliography.

Analysis of one chapter will give an idea of

In a hard light

P. E. Easterling

ROBERT FAGLES (Translator)
Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays
Introductions and Notes by Bernard Knox
408pp. Allen Lane. £14.95.
07139 14556

One of the most important achievements of modern American scholarship has been in making genuinely poetic translations of ancient poetry. Robert Fagles has established his reputation with the *Oresteia*; his latest venture, the three Theban plays of Sophocles, is perhaps a still more ambitious undertaking. Bernard Knox has contributed authoritative introductory essays and explanatory notes; the overall impression the book gives is of a careful and sensitive effort to "stand in the hard Sophoclean light" (Pound, quoted as a watchword in the preface). Sophocles is of course extraordinarily difficult to translate. The density and ambiguity of his language and the understated effects of style are all too easily lost as the translator finds himself forced to choose too definitely between different possible renderings. It would be wrong to judge this translation, or any translation, by the criterion of an unattainable ideal; we should rather be asking what are the translator's most important goals and most dangerous pitfalls.

The pitfalls are easier to identify. Translation is one which Fagles very rarely falls into ("the walls for men and women in your halls" is an isolated example). More difficult to avoid is unevenness of tone: translations are often modishly pretentious, or banal, or both. Fagles is not pretentious - one of his major strengths is the dignity and seriousness of his rendering - but sometimes the dialogue falls flat. "Well then, I'll be going", says Tiresias at the end of his violent quarrel with Oedipus, and in an otherwise intense speech of denunciation he foretells "a load of other horrors". In *Oedipus at Colonus* Ismene's reply to Antigone's agonized question "Where, I ask you, where do we wander now? - / what alien land, what heaving salt seas - / where will we find the bitter bread of life?" comes down with a bump: "I've no idea". But the colloquial manner is more often a strength than a weakness: Fagles can use it to achieve effects of sustained in-

tensity, and despite the examples just quoted his control over tone is usually secure.

Modern translations often break up complex syntax into shorter units and rely heavily on exclamation and parataxis. Fagles is not without his favourite mannerisms ("Never", "No!", "Enough"), but he avoids the monotonous staccato effect of long stretches of very short lines, and in general his rhythmic instinct is very sure. Just occasionally he sacrifices perfect clarity to the demands of rhythm or style, but he is scrupulous with his text, and Knox's notes explain the choice that has been made in the case of disputed readings.

What does this translation positively achieve? It captures something of Sophocles' sophistication and depth and much of his formal variety and rhetorical power. Whole layers of literary allusion are inevitably lost, but the renderings do bear out the important point made by Knox that Sophocles' plays explored contemporary realities with intellectual rigour. Fagles is not afraid of repeating words when Sophocles does ("ruin" in *Antigone*, "mole" in *Oedipus at Colonus* for instance); this can be particularly effective in his versions of the lyrics. The best way to illustrate his quality is to give a sample; here is a stanza from a famous ode in the *Colonus*:

Not to be born is best
when all is reckoned in, but once a man has seen the light
the next best thing, by far, is to go back
back where he came from, quickly as he can.
For once his youth slips by, light on the wing
lightheaded - what mortal blows can he escape
what griefs won't stalk his days?
Envy and enemies, rage and battles; bloodshed
and last of all despised old age overtakes him,
stripped of power, companions, stripped of love -
the worst this life of pain can offer,
old age our mate at last.

As one would expect, Knox's contributions are all thoughtful and eloquently written; and the piece on *Oedipus the King* includes a discussion of free will and responsibility that ought to be required reading for all students of Sophocles. His analysis of *Antigone* has many good points to make, but leaves one feeling that the issue is treated a shade too categorically; the ambivalent response of the Chorus comes out more strongly in Fagles's translation.

The book is well designed and opulently produced, almost too opulently; the paperback will no doubt be a more comfortable weight.

points we are given not only a statement of what Hornblower believes but an indication of why he believes it. If he had tried to cover his tracks thoroughly the notes would have had to be extended considerably; as things stand, there are places where the expert will recognize that an alternative view is being suggested but the novice will not realize that controversy exists.

References and notes are admirably up to date, and opportunity has been taken to mention several recently published inscriptions and other archaeological finds. Modern writers cited range from foreign-language periodicals to the novels of Mary Renault, and others. The end of the book is strangely misnamed "The final assessment of Alexander's time", a volume which I fear will be regarded by the many students whose syllabuses are based on Alexander's death.

In the effort to achieve prompt publication a number of minor errors have slipped through the net; the corrected reprint, when it comes, will be an even better book than the original edition. One mistake is important enough to be corrected here. Page 139 dates the outbreak of Hyperbolus "probably in 418", which must be the date of the Peloponnesian War, the most serious omission of essential matter is on page 257, where we are taken straight from Philip's sieges of Perinthus and Byzantium to his appearance at Elaea without any explanation of what brought him back into Greece. In addition, room has been found for a good many less obvious but very enlightening facts, and even the expert is likely to come across details which he had not known or connections which had not occurred to him. On many controversial

points we are given not only a statement of what Hornblower believes but an indication of why he believes it. If he had tried to cover his tracks thoroughly the notes would have had to be extended considerably; as things stand, there are places where the expert will recognize that an alternative view is being suggested but the novice will not realize that controversy exists.

Below street level

B. W. Cunliffe

RALPH MERRIFIELD
London: City of the Romans
287pp. Batsford. £14.95.
07134 27450

The origin and early history of a city cannot fail to be an emotive issue for anyone with the least degree of curiosity. Few can resist the temptation of peering into a contractor's hole and many of those who do are now sufficiently aware of the work of the archaeologist to realize that the layers of dirt and rubble they are seeing in the trench sides are the raw material from which history is written. Every gulp of the bulldozer's jaws consumes another part of the record unread, a record which is finite and fast disappearing, especially in the centres of our major cities like London.

It was not until the 1930s, when Mortimer Wheeler took over the running of the London Museum, that any systematic watch was kept on development sites in the city. After the war, in the spite of massive rebuilding following the Blitz, when vast areas of the ancient core of the city were redeveloped, the problem of how best to organize an archaeological response had rapidly to be faced. In the event an Excavation Council was set up to dig bombed sites before development, while the Guildhall Museum staff recorded what could be rescued during building operations elsewhere. In 1965 Ralph Merrifield, then deputy keeper of the Guildhall Museum, published an up-to-date survey of results under the title *The Roman City of London*. Now, eighteen years later, he returns to his old love in *London: City of the Romans*.

Eighteen years have seen a revolution in our knowledge, largely as the result of the arduous and often spectacular activities of the Museum of London's Department of Urban Archaeology. What Merrifield presents is a thoroughly up-to-date account of the city, incorporating the latest discoveries and the latest thoughts,

On the wrong track

Stuart Piggott

TOM WILLIAMSON and LIZ BELLAMY
Ley Lines in Question
232pp. World's Work, Hadfield Associates, 19
Christchurch Hill, London NW3. £9.95.
0437 192059

Ley lines form the core of a belief about prehistoric Britain, held by many people, that does not coincide with the inferences of archaeologists, but is summed up in William Blake's dictum, "The Primeval State of Man was Wisdom, Art and Science". The "lines", in the original presentation of the belief in the 1920s, were Old Straight Tracks laid out by ancient man with mathematical precision, and recoverable by drawing lines with a ruler on the 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Map through a number of features recorded there; those with the most significance being prehistoric burial mounds and other earthworks such as hill-forts; medieval churches, castle mottes, homestead mounds and stone crosses; and small "mark stones", ponds, fords, wells, avenues of trees and isolated Scots pines. If more than a certain number of these features occurred on the pencil line, over a given distance of miles, you had established a ley line dating from what are usually said to be "neolithic times", and revealing the lost skills of the ancient surveyors.

Concoction was sought in place-names and other evidence of the lost wisdom of the countrywide, like the Great Decadon Monro put it. From here to the notion of a prehistoric Golden Age is a short step, and in this background H. J. Massingham, from *Download Man* (1926) to *Through the Wilderness* (1935) is a significant figure. Today, in a predominantly anti-intellectual and populist climate of thought, such ideas have an added significance as a DIY hobby for anyone. "No one need be an expert in any field, no A-levels are needed", writes a ley-line "all that is necessary is a love of the countryside, an ability to observe".

The Williamson and Bellamy rightly believe that ley-line "hobby" has an added significance as a DIY hobby for anyone. "No one need be an expert in any field, no A-levels are needed", writes a ley-line "all that is necessary is a love of the countryside, an ability to observe".

set against the background of the city's rapid rise and its eventual death. But this is far more than a bold statement of archaeological fact and historical narrative, for the author often digresses, in a most entertaining fashion, to explain the subtleties of particularly difficult or interesting archaeological problems. No one who reads the book can fail by the end to understand something of how the archaeologist goes about this work: it is an honest insight into the more fascinating ways of the profession.

The story of London is by no means complete and many problems necessarily remain unresolved. What happened, for example, in the seven years or so after the Roman invasion of AD 43? The main river crossing then seems to have been well upstream in the vicinity of Westminster, but already on the site occupied by the later city there was some activity - a military-style ditch at Aldgate produced a bone handle-grip of a legionary's sword. It is not much to go on, but the earliest levels are so deeply buried that they are seldom seen. What does emerge, however, is that urban development did not really get under way until about AD 50 from when, in the heart of the city, in the area of Lombard, Fenchurch and Gracechurch Streets, fragments of early timber-framed buildings with gravelled areas between them have been uncovered.

We know from Tacitus that early London was teeming with merchants and traders - a boom town in the new raw province where a wily entrepreneur could make rich pickings by exploiting the natives; we also know that in AD 60 Britain was in the throes of a revolt led by Queen Boudicca and London, along with Colchester and Verulamium, was burnt to the ground. By plotting the distribution of the fire-discoloured samian pottery, closely dated to the time of the Boudiccan revolt, the extent of the earliest city can be roughly gauged. The centre lay to the east of the River Walbrook but there was an extensive spread to the west as far as King Edward Street - in other words London by AD 60, a decade after its founda-

tion, was already a considerable town. In addition to fragments of burnt buildings there is the tantalizing evidence of large numbers of human skulls found in the mud of the River Walbrook - could they have been the result of decapitations when London fell to the rebels? - so far the dating evidence is too vague to be sure, but the possibility remains.

After the disaster London, like the rest of the province, was slow to recover and it was not until the early 70s that work began on an impressive civic centre - the forum and basilica which lie deep beneath the centre of the modern city just north of the confluence of Lombard, Fenchurch and Gracechurch Streets. The latter part of the decade saw urban development in south-eastern Britain in full swing, spurred on by governors intent on integrating the wayward province with the rest of the Empire. Almost as soon as the first forum had been completed, plans seem to have been laid to replace it with a far more grandiose structure incorporating a huge basilica about the same length as St Paul's. It was largely finished about the turn of the century though certain modifications were being made, possibly in preparation for the visit of the Emperor Hadrian in 122.

London at this time was at its peak. Down at Cannon Street, facing the Thames, stood the governor's palace; on the north-western fringes of the urban zone, in the Cripplegate area, was a twelve-acre fort for the military personnel stationed at London; and elsewhere within the regular grid of streets masonry buildings abounded. Behind all this prosperity lay the rapid commercial development of London's port with its wharfs built of massive baulks of squared timber lining the river front (so dramatically exposed in a recent series of excavations). It was here that cargoes from all over the Roman world were unloaded, bringing to the young province such luxuries as Italian wine, Spanish fish sauce, glass from the East and bronze tableware from southern Italy, to grace the tables of the *nouveaux riches*.

The late first and early second centuries


The study of antiquity is reduced to a leisure activity, with no need for hard work to intellectual application. All the time too there lurk the pleasures of projecting one's own presuppositions into the prehistoric past, and the authors aptly compare those astro-archaeologists anxious to people prehistory with ancestral mathematicians, a tendency from which even the great Newton was not immune, while his contemporary, the Reverend William Stukeley, discovered fellow-clergymen among the Druids. Much of the attraction of the non-archaeological, ahistorical approach to the past is its appeal to faith and belief, and the promise of a sort of certainty very different from working hypotheses scrapped when they are shown not to work; and replaced by better models, offered by archaeology.

Some years ago Sir Peter Medawar confronted this problem of popular pseudo-science in a classic review. "The spread of secondary and tertiary education", he wrote, "has created a large population of people, often with well-developed literary and scholarly tastes, who have been educated far beyond their capacity to undertake analytical thought." To such people, facile and intellectually dishonest approaches to problems such as the pseudo-archaeology of the ley hunters and their associates make an instant appeal: it is all so easy and so cosily comforting, with its hints of the occult and the mysterious. One would like to think that Williamson and Bellamy's *Ley Lines in Question* might undermine this sort of faith, but I am not sanguine. I would give the last word to Sir Peter, who concluded "If it were an innocent, passive gullibility it would be excusable, but all too clearly, alas, it is an active willingness to be deceived".

This excellent book takes the enquiry further by exploring the social context within which such views find acceptance. From their beginning in the 1920s these ideas have involved an unreal, Arcadian view of the rural landscape, the town-dwellers' nostalgic countryside of the Georgian poets in their weekend cottages, where "Out in the country everyone is wise, / We only can be wise on Saturday" is Harold Monro put it. From here to the notion of a prehistoric Golden Age is a short step, and in this background H. J. Massingham, from *Download Man* (1926) to *Through the Wilderness* (1935) is a significant figure. Today, in a predominantly anti-intellectual and populist climate of thought, such ideas have an added significance as a DIY hobby for anyone. "No one need be an expert in any field, no A-levels are needed", writes a ley-line "all that is necessary is a love of the countryside, an ability to observe".


marked the peak of London's prosperity; thereafter there are signs of decline, reflecting the successive economic crises which gripped the empire at large. This is not to say London was destitute - far from it. The economy was sufficiently strong to fund a rash of monumental buildings, including a temple complex, put up at about the time of the visit of the Emperor Severus in the early third century. In the same period the entire built-up area was enclosed by a handsome city wall, but even so there were large open areas where previously buildings had stood and the dereliction seems to have grown, until by the middle of the fifth century, after Roman rule had broken down, London had become a ghost town.

The story of London's growth and decline so lovingly presented by Merrifield, is based entirely upon archaeological evidence and more particularly upon the results of excavations carried out under the most difficult of conditions amid the redevelopments of the last forty years. By the end of this century it is unlikely that there will be much of the unique archaeological record of the city left undisturbed. Ralph Merrifield's book is timely. It is a taking stock of what we know. In presenting us with an elegant and highly readable survey he has brought into sharp focus the problems to which archaeologists must now address themselves before it is too late.



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The fleet embattled

Robert Conquest

ISRAEL GETZLER
Kronstadt 1917-1921: The fate of a Soviet democracy
296pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.
052124479X

The familiar saying that for every honest sympathizer with communism there sooner or later comes a Kronstadt can be supported by the reaction to all sorts of villainies – the Moscow Trials, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and so on. But why did the original Kronstadt not do the trick once and for all? Because, like the others in their turn, it was forgotten? Some years ago, when the centenary of the Paris Commune and the fiftieth anniversary of Kronstadt fell on the same week, the colour supplements were full of the former: nothing about the latter, though the Commune was no more than the last hiccup of Jacobinism (with Fabre d'Eglantine's calendar and all), while Kronstadt was the forerunner of many revolts against Leninism. Or so I would have said until recently: but Israel Getzler's illuminating new book reminds one that, at least in its public philosophy, Kronstadt too had much in common with the romantic revolutionism of pre-Leninist days.

Professor Getzler gives two-thirds of his space to Kronstadt between 1905 and 1920, and in particular the period between March 1917 and July 1918 which he sees as the "golden age of Soviet democracy" at the naval base. He plainly sympathizes with the Kronstadt experiment. But he is also clear about its defects: "the obsessive desire" to subject all decisions to "the active body politic"; "indeed, it was precisely the flourishing grass-roots democracy that sometimes enabled popular, skilful, and unscrupulous agitators to subvert the institutionalized 'general will'". A Bolshevik comment puts it in even more hostile fashion: "degraded and demoralized by a 'katorga'-like existence under Tsardom, this crowd lacked proletarian class-consciousness. It had the

psychology of a Lumpenproletariat..." Such acerbity is due to the unfortunate fact that, as Getzler points out, this bastion of the revolution had as its staunchest supporters "the neo-Populist, non-Marxist, radical left, the Left SRs, SR-Maximalists and Anarcho-syndicalists". Lenin was furious with the sailors from soon after the February Revolution, and they were later continuously critical of the Soviet regime. But the "unscrupulous agitators" whom Getzler mentions as successfully distorting their intent were Bolsheviks; and however persistently unsatisfactory to Lenin the Kronstadters may have remained in their internal arrangements, they always provided the Bolsheviks with armed support at critical moments.

It can be argued that, in one sense, Kronstadt was an anomaly. It is certainly true that it was a very particular case. The island naval base, serving a Tsarist fleet run with clumsy brutality, had already seen a mass mutiny of a primitive, unthinking kind in 1905, followed by a largely Social-Revolutionary rising in 1906. By 1917, it probably held more rank-and-file revolutionaries, since it was inevitably staffed with fairly skilled personnel, than any other armed garrison or even civilian locality. The February Revolution in Petrograd resulted in an immediate takeover by a "Committee of the Movement" headed by an SR student, and eventually by a Kronstadt Soviet. For the next nine months this body alternated between non-recognition and highly conditional and often repudiated recognition of the Provisional Government, in spite of intercession by the Petrograd Soviet and even, at times, by the Bolshevik Party. After the October Revolution (in which Kronstadt's support was crucial) it remained under the control of non-Bolsheviks, and continued its multi-party, or non-party, democratic debate over every issue, conducted both in the very public Soviet and in mass meetings in Anchor Square. Later it came out against Brest-Litovsk, and finally in mid-June 1918 a Cheka operation, ostensibly to root out White Guard plotters (and soon linked to the abortive Left SR revolt in Moscow in early July),

led to a complete seizure of the Kronstadt Soviet by the Bolsheviks.

The Bolshevik plenipotentiary, Raskolnikov, though unpopular for his ostentatious self-indulgence, kept a tight organization. But when Zinoviev contrived to get the Kronstadt party under the control of his Petrograd apparatus, and Raskolnikov was removed in February 1921, control slackened (Raskolnikov, of course, was one of those disgraced in the 1930s, having the rare afterlife of a posthumous rehabilitation and restoration to party membership under Khrushchev, and a still more posthumous de-rehabilitation later on).

The 1921 strike wave in Petrograd was a true large-scale workers' movement which severely shook the regime, though rather overshadowed in history by the greater drama at Kronstadt. It had effectively been put down by the beginning of March. A week earlier, joint worker-sailor action might perhaps have prevailed. As it was, it was an insistence on hearing the workers' grievances which began the sailors' revolt. What was astonishing was the way in which the tumultuous democracy, suppressed nearly two years earlier, instantly came back to life. Also interesting, and the harbinger of similar events in later crises in the Communist world, was the concurrent breakdown of the Communist Party itself in Kronstadt. On March 3, 1921, a "Provisional Bureau of the Kronstadt Organisation of the Russian Communist Party" was set up, headed by local veterans, with the purpose of supporting the rebel regime. But within a few days even this group crumbled, with the resignations of some 500 party members.

Though Lenin privately remarked that the rebels "do not want the White Guards and they do not want our state power either", the Communist line was that they were simply counter-revolutionaries, under the thumb of their ex-officer Chief of Staff Kozlovsky, who had in fact been one of the Bolsheviks' most loyal "military specialists". The Communists also attempted to improve appearances by alleging that the original Kronstadt sailors had now moved off, leaving a new and inexperienced lot. Trotsky was the original purveyor of the line, claiming that "vast numbers of revolutionary sailors" had been replaced by "accidental elements". Getzler shows that this last-ditch Marxist respectability is quite false: "at least three quarters of the 10,000 to 12,000 sailors – the mainstay of the uprising – were old hands who had served in the navy through war and revolution". This was particularly true of the 1,900 veteran sailors of the *Petrovavlovsk* and *Sevastopol* who spearheaded it, and of the majority of the Revolutionary Committee.

When we ask what their motivations were in

the final rebellion, we may think that the precise formulation, at least of positive aims, was to some extent a matter of "false consciousness". The negative aims were clear: to get rid of a regime of terror, of oppression of the peasants, and of perks for the commissars. Politically their outlook was almost inevitably presented in revolutionary terms, because the old intense hatred of Tsarism had destroyed any alternative. But after four years, loathing of the Bolsheviks seems to have been the real factor. In June 1918 a mutiny at the Torpedo Division on the mainland was in protest against bad conditions, without political content. A sailors' mutiny on October 14, 1918, had taken place under "reactionary" slogans. More striking yet, when in June 1919 Yudenich was advancing on Petrograd, the garrisons of Kronstadt's own mainland fort of Krasnaya Gorka, including many Communists and Left SRs, had gone over to the Whites.

Another of Lenin's estimates, however, may seem to go to the heart of the matter: whether "the new power" stood "to the left of the Bolsheviks or slightly to the right" it was bound to serve as a "stepladder" to "bourgeois counter-revolution". If one feels that the Kronstadt type of worker-sailor democracy was a hot-house flower which could only have survived as long as it did, or been revived as it temporarily was, in those very exceptional and isolated circumstances, and even then without much sign of permanence, then Lenin's general point, if not his terminology, may seem valid.

Kronstadt's immediate accomplishment was the conversion of Lenin to NEP. He saw the revolt as the true crisis of the Bolsheviks' current policies. Professor Getzler quotes letters received by the sailors from peasant relatives, and passed around the ships, which show that the connection with the regime's insane agricultural policy was a direct one; and though the rebels disclaimed restoration of the free market, one of their demands was for the workers' right to "direct exchange of products with the peasants" which amounts to much the same thing.

The regular Red Army assault on Kronstadt was a failure, and only by mobilizing special units of Communists was a human wave attack finally successful. As the author points out, even the allegedly democratic factions in the Communist Party, like the Workers' Opposition, boasted about their loyal response to party discipline. As so often since, it was precisely this fetishism of party unity which cut them off from all other political or moral considerations. It gave them victory; but it had also brought them into a desperate situation in the first place, as it was to do so often later, and no doubt will again.

The masses divided

Alec Nove

VICTOR ZASLAVSKY
The New Socialist State
193pp. Brighton: Harvester. £18.95.
0710804199

This is an intelligent extended essay by a thoughtful author. Victor Zaslavsky's political position is by no means unsympathetic to socialist ideas, though of course he stresses their pervasiveness in the Soviet Union. Without going quite so far as Alexander Zinoviev, he insists that there is a sort of "organized consensus", that the regime is able to "organize" stratification and use graded privilege to achieve a considerable degree of acceptance and stability. He explains the revival of the Stalin cult, not just or even mainly at the summit of political power but also among the people. Here the traditional myth of the Good Tsar is reinforced by memories of big industrial advances and social mobility, of the fact that under Stalin the privileged trembled in terror, whereas now they enjoy their privileges unchallenged. The atomization of society is accepted by many if not most, "in exchange for a few real or even illusory privileges".

Zaslavsky notes the role of army service in the processes of socialization, and also how "secret" enterprises and "closed cities" – these being parts of a hierarchical structure which divides the masses – those working in

closed high-priority enterprises and/or who have a resident's permit for Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, etc., have a valid sense of oneness, so to speak. He refers also to a category which is new to me, "limitchiki" (or "limitchiki"), persons who have a temporary permit to live in a closed city conditional upon working in a prescribed job, and who cannot lose this if they are fired. He notes with bitterness the widespread "working-class chauvinism" as reflected in popular reaction to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and the conformist attitude of most intellectuals.

His chapter on nationalities and ethnic questions generally is also sensible and balanced, with the Russians as dominant, but with some authentic power exercised in the union republics. "The control of local elites" is no simple matter of domination-subordination. Zaslavsky notes the widespread feeling of nationalism in the Baltic republics, but regards it as exaggerated the view that Islam is a unifying factor in Central Asia.

The "organized consensus" is under strain as a result of economic difficulties and the lack of dynamism which characterized the second half of the Brezhnev period. There are many outstanding problems, one of which is the reduction and danger of having recourse to political nationalism. But I cannot adequately summarize Zaslavsky's complex argument. Apparently the book is great. Sweet, guinea pigs would read the book with profit.

Doing without the music

Russell Davies

NOËL COWARD
The Lyrics
418pp. Methuen. £9.95 (paperback, £3.95).
0413543102
ROBERT KIMBALL (Editor)
The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter
354pp. Hamish Hamilton. £25.
024111412

Everyone knows that the words of popular songs and show-tunes stand up only very shakily by themselves; and the nearer one gets to the sources of such material, the more frankly this fact is admitted. As Noël Coward remarks in his own introduction:

Unless the reader happens to know the tune to which the lyric has been set, his eye is liable to be bewildered by what appears to be a complete departure from the written rhythm to which his eye has subconsciously become accustomed. In fact, what I am trying to explain to the reader of this formidable volume is that in many instances, the words and rhythms he reads, divorced from the melody line that holds them together, may appear to be suddenly erratic, inept or even nonsensical.

Making a similar point from a slightly more showbiz-industrial point of view, Robert Kimball, editor of the new Cole Porter book (which really is a formidable volume), adds: "Of course, it would have been desirable to have compiled the music along with the lyrics, especially since Porter almost always wrote both. But such a compilation would have run to thousands of pages, and its cost would have been prohibitive. The task lies more properly in the domain of the music publishers."

Seeing the complete – or completest possible – output of a man like Porter is extremely interesting. For one thing, vast portions of his work were rejected or discarded: sometimes by producers; or by common consent of public and production staff during try-outs; or by the public's second thoughts after a show's opening; or even by prestigious cast members (Bert Lahr, we are quite believably told, refused to perform one highly-wrought song called "Dainty Quainty Me" simply because the rhyme-scheme, in *extremis*, had stooped to match "cinema" with "cinema"). And this is to say nothing of the stuff Porter himself consigned to the waste-bin before his secretaries could copy, date and file it. So this is a man capable of watching great goods of his effort wiped out not just from the public but from the private record.

Born in 1891, Porter made a meal of the early-century good-fellowship at Yale (where he wrote several of those inexcusably awful cab-rag songs) and took a long time to grow out of it. The 1920s did not offer him the best climate in which to progress. The real guts of the musical development of the age were rumbling in dives and speakeasies, where black jazz instrumentalists were extending the compositional vocabulary of the age. Porter knew about this (in a mid-1920s note he revels in "an entirely new rhythm which only the blacks have used so far") but his visits were only fashionable plumbing. Being rich, well-connected, an experienced European traveller and one of the more notable good-time Charlies on the Fitzgerald-fuelled cocktail circuit, he was rather distantly connected to the developments at home, and had, for the most part, only conventionally insouciant lyrics to add to the age of the flapper.

By 1926 he was, becalmed. A letter records, in fact, that he was living in a *palazzo* in Venice, where "I had given up all hope of ever being successful on Broadway" (he was thirty-two by this time) and had taken up painting. It was Irving Berlin who sent a New York producer out to Italy, to haul Porter back to Broadway, and the immediate result was "Let's Do It", one of his most enduring and embellished hits. (Noël Coward himself eventually applied to Porter for permission to extend the lyrics in his own direction, and was refused.) "Chicks go it, Japs do it" was perhaps not the most ingratiating of starts, but one which did, bees do it" had been substituted: the song was away. Porter's readings in *Let's Do It*, Brownie and Swinburne had been to hear their suitably bizarre fruit ("Old time who hang down from twigs do it" / "Sweet, the effort is great / Sweet, guinea pigs



every appearance of slavish imitation of its recent forbear ("The fools fall, the wise fall / The wets, the sprinkled and the dries fall ..."). But the sound-film was beginning to demonstrate the possibilities of more intimate performance; and in Fred Astaire, Porter found a conversational delivery-man of a truly unusual and perfectly appropriate kind. With the debonair whisp of Astaire and the contrasting foghorn of Ethel Merman, along with the more conventional voices of both sexes, Porter was equipped for the 1930s with a potentially complete range of human vocal production; and he did not let the opportunity slip. Probably his best single burst was the Merman trio of "I Get A Kick Out Of You", "You're The Top", and "Anything Goes", from the show of that name. Even here, controversy pursued Porter into the wings ("Some get a kick from cocaine" was frowned upon, and doesn't look quaint even yet); and his languid 1920s persona still lurked ("That would bore me terribly too ..."). But the talent had found its way.

It was in 1937 (that the riding-accident occurred in which Porter's legs were crushed by a horse (he lay there, he claimed, working on the song "Al Long Last Love" until help arrived, hence perhaps the line "Is it an earthquake or simply a shock?") A series of some thirty operations to save the limbs – unavailing at the last – began its course; and he was in pain ever afterwards. Porter must have found the "kick from champagne" even harder to come by than before. Not that there was any lack of cause for celebration. By now sheer showbiz experience could be relied on to fog out such flag-wavers as "Be A Clown" or "From This Moment On", perhaps the most famous Porter song to be dropped by the production for which it was written (though it's noticeable that the production version features a rather glutinous-looking "Interlude" which may have killed the number's chances). But gradually the feeling comes that zest is being fought for, and a late upbeat masterpiece like "It's All Right With Me" is rare. Porter's songs for *High Society* were fine, but charm of delivery secured the fame of most of them. On the whole it was surprising that he managed them at all: He had suffered a mental breakdown in 1951; his wife had died in 1954; and his last decade was a trial both to him and to those around him. Neither he nor his talent was built to cope with tragedy.

Though the works of Porter and Coward have moments of daft similarity, particularly when the habits of natives of distant Baluchistan of the South Sea Islands are under disguise

do it / Buy a couple and wait ..."). His innuendoes were quite lushly laid on, and the new radio stations in particular were wary of him. (It was years before "Love For Sale", the prostitution song, could be rendered in anything but an instrumental version.)

The only really regrettable thing about "Let's Do It" was that it replaced, in the show *Paris*, a parallel song called "Let's Misbehave", of which Irvin Aaronson and his Commanders made rather an inspiring record, before the better-known composition took over. Porter was not about trying to repeat a success in mechanical fashion, and the following year a film *The Battle of Paris* wrung from him a song called "They All Fall In Love" that gives

sion, the careers have an entirely different shape. Beginning as an *enfant terrible* in the 1920s, Coward gradually discovered a pageant-like purpose in his British citizenship. *Cavalcade* inaugurated the trend, and it culminated in his war-service as a touring artiste and sending a drive from Hanoi to Saigon) and onward to "There Are Bad Times Just Around the Corner", the anti-cheer-up anthem which it is interesting to see in its American variation ("In Maine the melancholia / Is deeper than tongue can tell"). By and large, the names are invoked by both men to call up received ideas and to site rather imperceptibly colonialist fantasies. One couldn't get away with much of it today.

If Porter's work seems, of the two, the more emblematically representative of his own national life, it's probably because it tries less hard to be. His best writing is tied more intimately to the immediate needs of American musicals and the known capabilities of the American stars who presented them (Coward's artistes always had to resist imitating Coward). Moreover, the bewilderment of arty-social-consumer references in Cole Porter songs is a very American thing in the first place. When he writes "You're the top! / You're an Arrow collar. / You're the top! / You're a Coolidge dollar. / You're the nimble tread of the feet of Fred Astaire. / You're an O'Neill drama, / You're Whistler's mama / You're Camembert ...", he is actually saying something about the "great storehouse of America" where all these things are, in their different ways, available. (Likewise the jolly racial mix implicit in a rhyme like "lipstick" and "Irish svipstick".) These set-piece songs are advertisements for abundance.

It says something for Porter's discipline that he was able to clamp down the cleverness from time to time and produce minimalist love-songs ("Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye") where the feeling and experience are not laid on verbally but supplied by the performer and listener together in that peculiar bonding of suggested and remembered experience. A song-lyric collection cannot help much here. It's the attention-getting virtuoso stuff that shouts from the page. Porter did not, perhaps, invest in the multitude of American vernaculars quite as wholeheartedly as he might have done, the call of Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne being stronger; but from time to time he would essay a rural ride. "Don't Fence Me In", however, his best in this line, turns out to have been very largely bought from a man called Fletcher (and for a song as well). Other fragments, like "Snagtooth Gertie" ("Snagtooth Gertie, will you be mine? / Your tooth it ain't so purty but it's gen-u-ine") remained unused – sensibly, I dare say, in the context of the time, though it seems a pity now. Porter's last song opens, touchingly, "Wouldn't it be fun not to be famous, / Wouldn't it be fun not to be rich! / Wouldn't it be pleasant / To be a simple peasant / And spend a happy day digging a ditch!" He and Coward were always writing things like this. They never believed it for a moment.

Liko Porter, Coward had a delight in preposterous rhyme – and, Freudians would no doubt say, an anal disposition – which drew him naturally to list-making, cataloguing,

Both The Who (*Before I Get Old: The Story of the Who by Dave Marsh*, 546pp. Plexus. £6.95. 0 85965 083 9) and The Doors (*The Doors – The Illustrated History*, 208pp. Vermilion £7.95. 0 09 153821 1) had their roots in black rhythm-and-blues. They were both "singles" bands, preferring three-minute records to the musically linked "concept" albums that became fashionable after The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper*. Alcohol claimed a victim from each band, Jim Morrison because he wanted more from life than rock-and-roll, Keith Moon (The Who's masterly drummer), because rock-and-roll was all that he did want. Both bands gave sensational concerts; Morrison's drunkenness electrifying or stultifying his audience as the mood took him, The Who making a habit of smashing their instruments on-stage.

The main difference between The Doors and The Who lay in the kind of audience that the bands attracted. The Who's original fans were the Mods, a contingent of sharply-dressed youths whose interests evolved around motor-scooters, amphetamines and the colour of their socks. They had no wish to alter society for it was from society that they earned or conned the money to enhance their life-style.

name-dropping songs. Perhaps travel – maps – brought it out in both of them. Certainly place-names are fertile territory to Coward, right from the mid-1920s ("Raspberry Time in Run-corn") to his affectionate satires of Empire ("Mad Dogs and Englishmen" was written during a drive from Hanoi to Saigon) and onward to "There Are Bad Times Just Around the Corner", the anti-cheer-up anthem which it is interesting to see in its American variation ("In Maine the melancholia / Is deeper than tongue can tell"). By and large, the names are invoked by both men to call up received ideas and to site rather imperceptibly colonialist fantasies. One couldn't get away with much of it today.

If Porter's work seems, of the two, the more emblematically representative of his own national life, it's probably because it tries less hard to be. His best writing is tied more intimately to the immediate needs of American musicals and the known capabilities of the American stars who presented them (Coward's artistes always had to resist imitating Coward). Moreover, the bewilderment of arty-social-consumer references in Cole Porter songs is a very American thing in the first place. When he writes "You're the top! / You're an Arrow collar. / You're the top! / You're a Coolidge dollar. / You're the nimble tread of the feet of Fred Astaire. / You're an O'Neill drama, / You're Whistler's mama / You're Camembert ...", he is actually saying something about the "great storehouse of America" where all these things are, in their different ways, available. (Likewise the jolly racial mix implicit in a rhyme like "lipstick" and "Irish svipstick".) These set-piece songs are advertisements for abundance.

It says something for Porter's discipline that he was able to clamp down the cleverness from time to time and produce minimalist love-songs ("Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye") where the feeling and experience are not laid on verbally but supplied by the performer and listener together in that peculiar bonding of suggested and remembered experience. A song-lyric collection cannot help much here. It's the attention-getting virtuoso stuff that shouts from the page. Porter did not, perhaps, invest in the multitude of American vernaculars quite as wholeheartedly as he might have done, the call of Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne being stronger; but from time to time he would essay a rural ride. "Don't Fence Me In", however, his best in this line, turns out to have been very largely bought from a man called Fletcher (and for a song as well). Other fragments, like "Snagtooth Gertie" ("Snagtooth Gertie, will you be mine? / Your tooth it ain't so purty but it's gen-u-ine") remained unused – sensibly, I dare say, in the context of the time, though it seems a pity now. Porter's last song opens, touchingly, "Wouldn't it be fun not to be famous, / Wouldn't it be fun not to be rich! / Wouldn't it be pleasant / To be a simple peasant / And spend a happy day digging a ditch!" He and Coward were always writing things like this. They never believed it for a moment.

The Doors fans had their sights on higher things: they believed that the band, with its name taken from Huxley's *Doors of Perception*, had the answer to life itself.

What neither audience grasped was that it was being taken for a ride. The Who's projection of a Mod as a stuttering ("My Generation"), mother-dominated ("I'm a Boy") messed-up nobody (*Quadrophonia*) escaped its fans entirely. Similarly The Doors' audience mistook for genius Morrison's sophomoric acquaintance with symbolist literature. The Doors seem the superior of the two groups. Lyrics are more thoughtful, rhythms lighter, jazz and blues roots more deeply put down. By a quirk of fate The Who have had more influence; Almost every punk band pays lip-service to The Who.

Dave Marsh's *Before I Get Old* is exemplary; detailed, stimulating and musically analytical. Danny Sugerman's *Illustrated History* is glossy, superficial, and heavily reliant on photographs. Both books, informative on printed sources, lack a discography, which is an understandable omission.

T.D.A.S.

The grammar of descent

Michael Ruse

D. S. BENDALL (Editor)
Evolution from Molecules to Men
594pp. Cambridge University Press. £18.
0521247553

It's as much fun being an evolutionist today as it was during the ten years after Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Although contemporary controversy is cast in slightly more modern terms (DNA and all that), basically it's the same old worries which continue to nag: adaptation and the design-like nature of organisms; the fossil record; and, above all, the status of our own species, *Homo sapiens*.

In the *Origin*, Darwin set himself two tasks. First he tried to make the idea of at least some form of evolution something a reasonable man could and should accept. In this attempt he was highly successful. Despite episcopal misgivings, within a short time indeed, reasonable men (and women) were all evolutionists. Where Darwin was somewhat less successful was in his second self-imposed task. He proposed a mechanism for the evolutionary process: natural selection. Starting from the Malthusian premise that organism numbers tend to outstrip resources, he argued that in the consequent struggle for existence the successful (or fitter) are thus "selected" as the parents of the next generation. Over the years, this winnowing process leads to full-blown evolution.

There were lots of reasons why Darwin's readers felt far less convinced of the adequacy of natural selection, than they had of evolution *per se*. Some of these reasons were theological. Could the hand and the eye – the greatest proofs of the Almighty's intervening Design – really be products of blind natural law? But there were also scientific objections to natural selection. Chief among these was the legitimate complaint that Darwin had no theory of heredity (or "genetics"), and that this, however effective selection may be, the normal processes of generation would render all gains null and void. It was not until the beginning of this century that an adequate theory of heredity was developed, and not until the 1930s that this theory was blended with selection to yield a happy, complete picture of the evolutionary process. At last, in the "synthetic theory of evolution" or "neo-Darwinism", biologists had what Thomas Kuhn has called a paradigm, a firm background against which they could work. And this state of affairs continued into the 1950s.

But as the 1950s drew to a close, neo-Darwinism began to show some very unparadigmatic characteristics. Tensions grew within, and pressures impinged from without. From being a staid, slightly old-fashioned area of biology, in the past quarter of a century evolutionary theory has become a very hot topic. Now scientific controversy calls inevitably for conferences, and 1982 was the hundredth anniversary of Charles Darwin's death, with the result that biologists of all stripes flew around the world to confer at length on things evolutionary. At times it was all rather like a travelling circus. (I know of three biologists who attended no less than ten such conferences each).

The most prestigious conference was that sponsored by Darwin College, Cambridge. There were a number of formats open to the organizers. They could have aimed at a gathering of leading evolutionists, intending simply to let all talk to each other about the latest research. Alternatively, they could have aimed at having biologists talking professionally to other scientists, not necessarily in their own field. Then they could have sponsored a conference aimed at the general public: how does Charles Darwin himself rate, and where stands evolutionary theory today? But, my feeling at the conference itself was that the organizers couldn't really make up their minds as to what they wanted. And, regrettably, this lack of direction is reflected in the conference proceedings contained in the volume under review.

Consequently, this is certainly not the right book for the general reader, looking for a relatively clear guide to evolutionary thought today. It is true that some of the contributions would suit well a reader perfectly, especially

the historical papers dealing with Darwin's own legacy. Ernst Mayr, in particular, having established himself as one of the founders of neo-Darwinism, now in his retirement shows himself equally talented as a historian. Also, Glynn Isaac's witty review of thinking on human evolution deserves mention, as do Anthony Hallam's thoughts on the evolutionary relevance of plate tectonics, and Bernard Williams' comments on the ultimate moral implications of evolutionary biology. But, for the most part, the general reader would find this volume hard going, and would do better to turn to one of the other collections published to mark the centenary.

I doubt whether specialists will get much from this volume either. They will prefer to turn to professional sources. But for a third class of reader, who probably knows quite a bit of science, and wants to find out why evolutionists are so excited about their subject at the moment, there is much to be learnt from *Evolution from Molecules to Men*. Let me pick out three areas of note.

First, most strongly, one feels the impact of molecular biology. In the 1950s, conventional biologists dreaded the double helix. It, and its implications, seemed to spell doom for those dealing with real organisms. Unless you could kill your subject and then blast it apart into the smallest particles, you apparently were not doing proper science. Evolutionary theory was little more than stamp-collecting, as one eminent molecular biologist put it. Now, as several contributions here show well, molecular biology is the vital search-light of the evolutionist, making brilliantly clear much that was hitherto unanswered and unanswerable. For instance, conventional evolutionists can say little or nothing about the ultimate origins of life, although their theory obviously poses questions in that direction. Today, knowing about the underlying structure of organisms, we are moving beyond speculation into testable hypothesis. This comes out clearly in Manfred Eigen's discussion of the possible origins of the basic templates of life, the ribonucleic acids (DNA and RNA).

Perhaps even more exciting is the way in which molecular biology gives answers to traditional problems. For instance, if Darwinism is correct, then even very slight selective advantages should lead to major evolutionary effects. But how does one test for slight advantages, given that accidental distortions from experiments might be far greater than anything one could hope to measure? Thanks to our understanding of the molecular mechanisms of heredity, such slight values can now be examined directly. And, in a *tour-de-force*, Eviatar Nevo of Haifa University exploits his small country's extraordinary ecological diversity – from mild sea-coast climate to harsh desert in just a few miles – to show that selection matters all the way. He and other contributors prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that if you find a difference between organisms, then you should look for Darwinian reasons for it.

A second area of excitement comes from work which centres on the fossil record, where it is argued that even though selection may have ecologically connected effects (as Nevo shows), over the long term selection is not all that crucial. In fact, even in the 1860s Darwin's critics argued that the record contains far too many gaps and abrupt transitions to support a gradual process of change. In other words, it negates the overall effectiveness of a process such as natural selection is supposed to be. This same refrain is sung by Stephen Jay Gould in his contribution, as he argues instead for his now-celebrated thesis of "punctuated equilibria". According to Gould, evolution involves long periods with little change, followed by rapid spurts when significant alterations occur – fox to dog, if not greater. Supposedly, these rapid changes – "saltations" – could not have been caused by natural selection. Darwin's mechanism, only, makes for those relatively minor differences (like skin colour) which don't show up in the fossil record.

More conventional Darwinians are not impressed by this argument, as Francisco Ayala's essay shows. First, there is the feeling that evolutionary questions really cannot be decided by the fossils – whatever Ayala may think – but that the tough questions and answers come from the study of the micro-

processes, as in genetics. I suspect myself, however, that although there is probably some truth in this criticism, a certain snobbery against "crude" subjects like palaeontology runs through the evolutionary approach (Ayala himself is a geneticist). After all, if we had no bridging fossils like *Archaeopteryx*, the bird-reptile, evolutionary studies would be much weakened.

Second, concerning punctuated equilibria, Ayala points out that much of the dispute over the fossil record is essentially semantic. Ten thousand years or more is but an instant to a palaeontologist, and any change occurring in that time is "very rapid". But ten thousand years to a fruit-fly geneticist, the evolutionist who cares directly about processes, is an absolute age, into which you can pack a vast amount of change. Hence, Ayala concludes – surely correctly – that much of the dispute about fossils is really about words. Neither side disputes the facts, that in (say) fifty thousand years you can get a lot of change. But, didn't we know this all along? Ayala thinks we did; although in Gould's defence, I would point out that it was a fact unjustly ignored, until palaeontologists started to make such a fuss about it.

A third area of controversy in evolutionary studies concerns behaviour, in so far as findings and conclusions apply to humans. Tremendous strides have been made in recent years in our understanding of the evolution of animal behaviour, as a fascinating paper here by T. H. Clutton-Brock on red deer bears out. Male and female red deer are different, physically and behaviourally, because what leads to evolutionary success for one sex is not necessarily that which leads to success for the other. Among the red deer, at least, biological equality does not imply biological identity.

Excellence in exactness

John Roche

JOHN W. SHIRLEY
Thomas Harriot: A Biography
508pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.
0198229011

John Shirley's long-awaited biography of Thomas Harriot (1560–1621) is the outcome of almost forty years of devoted and meticulous labour in a notoriously unyielding subject area. Harriot the natural philosopher is in many respects a construct of the art of the historian. Some five thousand sheets of his manuscripts survive, largely because of his foresight in depositing them with the Earl of Northumberland, and they reveal that Harriot's work on mathematical navigation, pure mathematics and natural science was on a par with that of his greatest contemporaries on the Continent. Harriot's reserve, and his failure to publish any scientific work in his lifetime, meant that his influence on the mainstream of science has been slight. Harriot, nevertheless, is of considerable interest to the historian of science, because his life spans that period of ferment in England which brought into being a new excellence in the mathematical arts of navigation, surveying, cartography and instrument making, and a new style and vigour in natural philosophy.

The well-designed experiments of William Gilbert on magnetism and the lucid arguments of Francis Bacon on behalf of experimental science have impressed subsequent generations with the view that the dominant scientific method pursued in Early Modern England was that of the experimental philosophy. This was largely taxonomic, qualitative and inductive, and was strongly inspired by considerations of Utility. The manuscripts of Harriot reveal, however, that the complementary pole of exact science – mathematical postulation applied to artefacts and to natural phenomena, controlled by experimental craftsmanship and precise numerical measurement, and motivated mainly by intellectual curiosity – was cultivated just as assiduously during the same period. Had Harriot published his researches on mathematical navigation, optics, projectiles and astronomy, this dual character of the new science would have been established in print in England at least, if not earlier, than it was on the Continent.

But people today seem just as far apart on the topic of *Homo sapiens* as they were in the time of T. H. Huxley. In this volume, as elsewhere, the Harvard entomologist and sociobiologist, Edward O. Wilson, moves in and applies biology directly to humans. We may be made in God's image, but we are also the products of evolution through natural selection. For instance, why don't brothers sleep with sisters? Because such inbreeding has horrendous biological consequences. Hence, there has been selection of instincts against incest. Opposing Wilson in this volume, again as elsewhere, other leading biologists argue that when it comes to humans, the biological rules don't count. Thus Patrick Bateson speaks of ideas on incest being "wildly over-interpreted", and of conclusions "uncritically accepted", and of the "intellectually shoddy" treatment of counter-evidence.

What is to be said in conclusion? I have long been of the opinion that conferences, if they are to be remembered at all, should be marked by a group photograph rather than by a published volume of proceedings, whose contributions are seldom, if ever, refereed properly. Even in essays from the most distinguished contributors, this lack of response to critical comment shows through. If nothing else, such refereeing might weed out the truly awful (to be found in the volume under review, as elsewhere).

But if one asks, one hundred years after his death, whether Darwin really merits such a volume in his honour the answer is yes indeed. Not only did he change the nineteenth century; but, right or wrong, as the twentieth century draws towards its end, his legacy is still the source of some of life's most fascinating and important questions.

Harriot's patrons, Raleigh and Henry Percy, the 9th Earl of Northumberland, involved him in many of the great dramas and tragedies of late Tudor and early Stuart England. Harriot was one of Raleigh's settlers in the short-lived Roanoke Colony in Virginia in 1585, and subsequently in Munster. He prepared navigational tables and instruments for Raleigh's voyage of 1594 in search of El Dorado. He was accused with Raleigh of atheism, and his name was linked with the ill-fated Christopher Marlowe and with Thomas Kyd. He was interrogated and imprisoned in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605. Although he was quickly released, Harriot's close association with his two great patrons, both now in the Tower, compelled him to keep a low profile for the rest of his life. Professor Shirley's exhaustive search of the literary remains of the period brings all of these and many more events to life in a wealth of detail.

Shirley has also set himself the formidable task of introducing an equally rigorous historical scholarship to Harriot's scientific expertise. This demands a considerable expertise in contemporary navigation, geography, cartography, gunnery, hydraulics, alchemy, astronomy, mechanics, optics, mathematics and geometry, such was the scope of Harriot's interests and involvements. While admiring Shirley's courage in attempting it, the specialist in some of these fields may feel at times that the quality of the analysis is not always sustained. Nevertheless, one is bound to applaud Shirley's ability to explain technical matters in an accessible, coherent and non-technical language.

Historians will be impressed by the large number of contemporary references to Harriot that Shirley has managed to unearth, and by his exhaustive analysis of the background to every documented event in Harriot's life. Although Harriot the person remains as elusive as ever, the circumstances which impinged on him are brought out more vividly and convincingly than in any previous biography. Harriot's work will also recognize that Professor Shirley has solved innumerable problems concerning Harriot's employment and movements, and pondering over carefully collated sources. This biography will serve historians and others with a wide range of interests for many years to come. It is a landmark in Harriot scholarship.

Hard times on the terracing

Paul Smith

PHIL SOAR and MARTIN TYLER
Encyclopedia of British Football
246pp. Collins Willow. £7.95.
0002180499
BRIAN WOOLNOUTH
Black Magic: England's Black Footballers
186pp. Pelham. Paperback, £4.95.
020714761
SIMON INGLIS
The Football Grounds of England and Wales
272pp. Collins Willow. £9.95.
0002180243

Reading this clutch of books, one wonders whether Britannia United might not make an even better image of our discontents than Lindsay Anderson's *Britannia Hospital*. The draughty arena built to accommodate the crowds and express the corporate pride of more confident days, where the stark terraces of a spartan past confront the cantilever follies which are converting penury into bankruptcy by way of *folie de grandeur*, and the ageing, the hooligan, and the unemployed assemble in declining strength to watch with waning enthusiasm the antics of the overpaid – what a theme for allegory!

The problems of falling attendances, swelling debts, violence, too much television and simply too much football loom large in Phil Soar and Martin Tyler's survey of the contemporary game in the new edition of the *Encyclopedia of British Football*. Their introductory chapters offer a wide and well illustrated, if repetitive, panorama of the development of the national game, its major competitions, and its forays abroad, but the heart of the work is its 150 pages of reference material covering the clubs and the league tables and cup and international results since 1871. This is a good buy at the price, especially for the clubs' colours and the ease of access to their league and cup records, but it jacks some desirable features to be found elsewhere – club crests, managers, and ground-plans, previous names and grounds, full Cup Final teams, and lists of international caps.

Soar and Tyler's rather apprehensive review of football's future is hardly counteracted by Brian Woolnouth's effort to discern a new source of energy in what he excitedly terms "the black explosion". This is a "standard set of questions plus tape-recorder equals book" production engagingly demonstrating the sports journalist's no doubt genuine conviction that the game is played for his benefit and indeed exists mainly by virtue of his efforts. Mr Woolnouth is clearly amazed to be told on ringing Garth Crooks at home in the evening, that "he didn't like talking to the press in his leisure time." Shocked readers will be relieved to know that Garth has since redeemed this unprofessional foul by working his way up to a weekly chat show on Capital Radio, thus honouring the great truth that chatting is the name of the game. Little bit colour and a common experience of prejudice seems to unite the black players interviewed here. Woolnouth thinks most of them want to "prove that a majority of coloured people in Great Britain are respectful, polite and well-mannered citizens", but this exemplary meekness is evidently not going to help them achieve the impact of the England team that he is looking for, since he reports Bobby Robson as wanting John Barnes to "put his shoulder in and show opponents that he is around."

Simon Inglis is concerned not with the play-time but with their stage. He is the indispensable book for the enthusiast who means to go to number of contemporary references to Harriot that Shirley has managed to unearth, and by his exhaustive analysis of the background to every documented event in Harriot's life. Although Harriot the person remains as elusive as ever, the circumstances which impinged on him are brought out more vividly and convincingly than in any previous biography. Harriot's work will also recognize that Professor Shirley has solved innumerable problems concerning Harriot's employment and movements, and pondering over carefully collated sources. This biography will serve historians and others with a wide range of interests for many years to come. It is a landmark in Harriot scholarship.

1875, and their elegant 1906 Grand Stand survives, though it is not the oldest still in use – Inglis accords that honour to Gillingham's Gordon Road stand. Bulwer Lytton wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii* in the original Craven Cottage, where Fulham's pitch now lies. Michael Davitt laid the first turf at Celtic Park, and Sir Frank Benson's company performed Shakespeare on Gay Meadow. Inglis rescues football's most influential if rather unimaginative architect, Archibald Leitch, from oblivion, and writes the obituaries of grounds that are gone, for those whom Accrington Stanley is a name of mystery and enchantment. He is a clock, crest, gable and flagpole man when it comes to adding a touch of colour to the utilitarian drabness of most grounds, and is not afraid of stating his preferences – the Shay is probably the least comfortable ground, Elm Park the least interesting. Despite his advocacy of improvements, this is a nostalgic, even romantic book, breathing the sense that the true experience of watching football can never be had behind the reflective glass of the executive box, but only on cinder terracing in the rain, with the scent of bronchial balsam and Woodbines in the air.

Fast talk from the corner

Vernon Scannell

ANGELO DUNDEE
I Only Talk Winning: Own Story as told to Mike Winters
263pp. Arthur Barker. £8.50.
0213168812

Good books about the fight game, whether fact or fiction, are very rare indeed, and *I Only Talk Winning* is not one of them. The unpretentious, ghosted autobiographies of well-known boxers are usually adequately transcribed and the clichés of style and attitude are less likely to offend than be reassuringly familiar to the readers for whom they are intended. A. J. Liebman and our own Hugh MacLennan have produced some first-rate journalism; Hemingway, in his short story "Fifty Grand", and a little-known American called W. O. Heinz in a novel, *The Professional*, have written better boxing fiction than anyone else I know of. The notion that Norman Mailer writes well about the sport is not entirely true: he has some knowledge of the game but he melodramatizes the violence and inherent theatricality, so that a brutal sentimentality vitiates the tough realism he is striving for.

Angelo Dundee's "Own story as told to Mike Winters" is a very odd concoction. The jacket carries beneath the title and description the legend "Dundee might be the greatest manager of all time – Muhammad Ali". But then, he might not, and certainly there is nothing in this book to suggest that he could be. Presumably Dundee would not have been hired or retained as manager by such champions as Luis Rodriguez, José Napoles, Sugar Ramos, and Willie Pastrano, far less Muhammad Ali and Ray Leonard, had he not been an unusually astute mentor and "corner man". A corner man might be the fighter's manager or trainer or both: he is the fellow who during a contest supplies succour and counsel and is skilled at treating troublesome swellings and cuts which might impede his fighter's vision. But *I Only Talk Winning* contains virtually no serious consideration of the techniques, the skills, the fascination, ethics and morality of boxing. Instead there is a relentless flippancy, an attempt to present a jokey Runyonesque character, wisecracking, worldly, tough but good-natured, loyal, generous to a fault, and very modest. Not easy when writing in the first person.

Dundee's ghost writer, the blurb tells us, is a former comedian who, with his brother, Bernie, once topped the bill at the London Palladium but has for the last five years lived in Florida where he is "now working behind the scenes in stage production and management." He also runs his own agency for theatrical and sports personalities, among them his close friend Angelo Dundee. "I cannot help wondering, if, with the pressure of all his business interests, Mike Winters was not obliged to hire

Sunny days in the scorebox

A. L. Le Quesne

JACK POLLARD
Australian Cricket: The Game and the Players
1162pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £19.95.
0340287969
R. S. WHITTINGTON
Kelth Miller: The Golden Nugget
312pp. Souvenir Press. £8.95.
0285625829

Australian Cricket is an immensely painstaking, immensely informative, and in some respects rather limited, labour both of love and integrity, and it demands respect accordingly. It would be better titled *A Dictionary of Australian Cricket* for in form that is what it is, a series of alphabetical entries starting at Abandoned Matches and ending at Zimbabwes, Anthony George, a leg-spinner who took 49 wickets for Australia at an average of 39.12 between 1933 and 1939; lightly lie the turf upon him. For the most part, it is a biographical dictionary. There are entries for every Australian Test player, down to the utterly improbable Tasmanian, Edwin Burn, who came in the 1890 Australian touring team to England be-

cause the great Blackham insisted on his inclusion as his deputy wicket-keeper: Burn joined the party on the wharf at Adelaide with the comment, "Here I am – but I have never kept wicket in my life" (he never did, but nevertheless played in the Lord's Test, broke the handle of his bat while taking guard and was then bowled first ball). There are also entries for a good many other first-class players who never achieved Test Match status, together with non-Australians like Garfield Sobers and Colin Milburn who have played for Australian State sides. It is a fair criticism of the book that, given the dictionary form, the criteria for inclusion are very imprecise, for it stops well short of the logical line of containing entries for all Australian first-class players.

This applies even more strongly to the non-biographical items, which are fairly arbitrary: they include excellent articles on – for instance – the Australian Cricket Board and its predecessors, an adequate although very cramped summary of the bodyline affair, interesting surveys of the development of cricket in each of the Australian States, necessarily impressionistic articles on Australian batting and Australian bowling, which in effect recapitulate much that appears in the biographical entries, the complete text of the current Laws of Cricket and an unpredictable scatter of miscellaneous articles on such diverse topics as Aboriginal Cricketers, Tied Matches and Throwing; yet readers will look in vain for articles on Barracking or Cricket Broadcasting or Crowds. Matters are not made easier by the absence of both index and list of contents, so that the only way of finding whether a given topic has been included or not is to guess how it might be described and search alphabetically for the point in question.

The truth is that Jack Pollard has tried to write two books at once, a biographical dictionary of great Australian cricketers and a history of Australian cricket, and has inevitably fallen some way between the two stools. Nevertheless, my final judgment, on this book must be one of resounding admiration. It represents an astonishing compilation of accurate information which will be invaluable to all future students of the game; particularly on the players of the pre-1914 era, on whom information is usually less easy to come by and where there is none of the muffling of appraisal which is inevitable when living players are being discussed. Articles like those on Trumper and Spofforth, or on such less known figures as Midwinter – the only man to have played for both England and Australia against each other – could hardly be bettered.

It is probably safe to say that, in the post-Second World War era, no Australian cricketer has made a greater impact by reason of both personality and performance, than Keith Miller. Certainly nobody of my generation is likely to forget the way that this tall, magnificently built figure with a mane of black hair forever being impatiently tossed aside, burst like a bombshell on the cricket-hungry crowds of 1946 with a series of splendidly forceful and debonair innings alternating with lethally aggressive spells of fast bowling. Miller was one of the few first-class cricketers whose personality carried easily, on first bounce so to speak, to the boundary and the crowds beyond it. It is one of the best features of R. S. Whittington's full and affectionate biography of his friend that that personality comes through it: a personality that owed so much to the war years and to Miller's distinguished record as a Mosquito pilot, and that perhaps in cricketing terms found its happiest expression in those Victory Tests of 1946. Miller was never fully at ease with the Australian cricketing establishment, and in particular not with its most distinguished representative, Bradman, in the years that followed: he never became captain of Australia, as he might so easily have done, and he never broke the records, made the thousands of runs or took the hundreds of wickets; that might have been expected of him; he was pre-eminently the man of the great occasion, not of the record books. It is hard to read Mr Whittington's book without sympathizing with Miller or feeling that he had got his values right, and that the Test cricket of the last generation would have been a better game if the Millers of this world had had more to do with the shaping of it.

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The march of the buboes

John Hatcher

ROBERT S. GOTTFRIED
The Black Death: Natural and Human Disaster in Medieval Europe
203pp. Collier Macmillan. £14.95.
002 9126304

The influence of the Black Death lingers on: a widespread fascination with the massive mid-fourteenth-century epidemic continues to result in a steady flow of books and articles. In the past fifteen years, for example, there have been three books in English with the same title as R. S. Gottfried's present volume, each written with an almost identical intention of surveying the impact of the Black Death on European society. Moreover, the arrival of Professor Gottfried's work coincided with an attempt (featured in a programme in BBC 2's *Time-watch* series) by a zoologist, G. I. Twigg, to question the conventional wisdom that it was bubonic and pneumonic plague which swept the known world in the 1340s.

Such involvement is fully justified, since the Black Death was an event of profound significance in the development of Europe, and consequently it features prominently in a number of important historical disputes. A lively scholarly debate continues to flourish between those who believe, along with William Stubbs, that the Black Death merely accelerated for a time changes which were already well under way, and those who suspect that the death of upwards of a third of the population, and the ushering in of a long era of low and declining population, inevitably produced frictions and distortions which materially assisted in the formulation of new social structures and relationships. Another dispute centres on whether increased mortality was an exogenous or endogenous factor: whether it was created by the growing imbalance between people and resources in the later thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and was thus the direct and inevitable consequence of severe overpopulation, or whether enhanced mortality was primarily due to changes in the pattern and virulence of disease, dependent in turn upon such natural phenomena as the mutation of bacilli and changes in climate, in the behaviour of insects and rodents and suchlike. Put another way, was the Black Death a Malthusian agent, punishing society for its demographic excesses and curbing its problems by reducing numbers, or was it the result of changes, unconnected with, or only loosely connected with, human actions?

Or to put it another way still: what had the greatest effect on the decline of feudalism, the crisis of overpopulation, the rise of the money economy, the internal contradictions and conflicts within feudalism itself, or a bacillus living in the stomachs of fleas on the backs of marmots, suikits and tarbagans in the remote steppelands of central Asia?

On these and related issues, of great interest and importance to those concerned with long-term changes and their causes, Gottfried's book offers little of substance. For it adopts a narrative rather than an analytical approach, and even on this level spends much of its time skating lightly over the surface. In truth it adds little to Philip Ziegler's study of the same title, published in 1969, and in many respects falls below the standards of accuracy and erudition which Ziegler employed. In his modest but in some ways impressive book, Ziegler expresses the hope that his work might "chance to provoke some academic historian - incensed by its inadequacy - into engaging in a major work of scholarship". It is manifest that Gottfried was not so incited; rather, he looks certain to incense academic historians far more successfully than his predecessor. For, strangely, the Black Death seems to afflict many contemporary researchers and writers in very much the same way as it did the survivors of the great mortality in the mid-fourteenth century, namely by inducing such a severe state of shock that normal standards of behaviour and judgement are abandoned. In this instance we have an established historian producing a book which, although well within his area of specialism, is markedly below the standard of his previous work. With Dr Twigg, as with Professor Shrewsbury before him (*A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*, 1970), we have a

scientist tackling the history of his subject with little of the skill, caution or application that he customarily adopts in the laboratory.

Gottfried's book frequently displays a disappointing lack of discrimination in its presentation of evidence, and it is peppered with errors, a number of them serious. All too often his method seems to be to gather whatever information he can from whatever source in order to throw light on the matter under scrutiny; thereby failing to pay sufficient heed to its validity or authenticity. Thus eye-witness accounts written soon after the event are lumped with secondhand reports written a generation or so later, and death-rates and population totals are gathered from any authority prepared to hazard them, frequently without sufficient attention to matters of plausibility or comparability. For example, we are told with assurance that Europe's "population had increased about 300% from the tenth to the mid-thirteenth century to 75-80 million, higher than it had been for close to a thousand years".



An interlaced human figure from Early Medieval Designs by Eva Wilson (128pp, with 100pp of line drawings. British Museum Publications. 07141 8056 4. £4.95).

King Norman the Second

R. H. C. Davis

FRANK BARLOW
William Rufus
484pp. Methuen. £15.
0413 281701

William Rufus is one of the newsworthy kings of English history, but public interest and curiosity have concentrated not so much on his life as on his death. This is because he was killed in suspicious circumstances while hunting in the New Forest. Was the fatal arrow really shot by Walter Tirel, and was it shot by accident or by design of the king's brother, who succeeded him as Henry I? No chronicler made any accusation at the time, but nearly all of them elaborated on the event in some way, claiming that the king's death had been foretold to various holy men in visions, or alleging that his corpse was transported to Winchester on a cart, dripping blood the whole way, and noting that in the following year the tower of the cathedral collapsed on to his tomb. Elaborate theories have been built on these stories, and accusations of witchcraft have been added to those of murder. They have been refuted repeatedly, as by Professor Hollister in 1973, but in this definitive biography Frank Barlow does well to refute them again.

This is one of the few points on which Barlow is in agreement with Edward August Freeman, who produced, 101 years ago, the only other full-length study of the reign. Freeman disapproved of Rufus as an "irreligious tyrant and a homosexual but thought his reign important. Barlow takes exactly the opposite point of view. He likes Rufus, thinks his "tyranny" nothing more than normal for the age, and defends him at length against the charge of bias.

yet when the sceptical reader checks the footnote he will find the following perplexingly naive statement: "Medievalists are usually reluctant to give population figures. One who is not is Carlo Cipolla, and the figures have been taken from his *Before the Industrial Revolution*." With his appetite for recounting the most bizarre forms of behaviour claimed by the sensationalist contemporary observers of the aftermath of the pestilence, Gottfried resembles Johannes Nohl, whose *The Black Death* was published in Potsdam in 1924; when from time to time this predilection leads him astray the resemblance is closer to Monty Python, as when he tells us that at the height of the epidemic in the town of Bibais "some roads had so many bodies piled along their sides that bandits took to utilizing them to conduct their ambushes".

I will list here only a few of Gottfried's blatant misstatements and misconceptions. The "purplish blotches" caused by subcutaneous haemorrhaging are not called buboes (p8); buboes are swellings of the lymphatic glands. Mortality and morbidity are not synonyms (*passim*); the mortality rate is the death-rate, whereas the morbidity rate is the sick rate. There was no "astounding decline" in agricultural productivity on the estates of the bishop of Winchester before 1300; the figures summoned in support of this contention are false (p25). The Peasants' Revolt did not mark the end of "statutes or ordinances fixing wages or limiting mobility" (p102); on the contrary, such statutes were reiterated throughout the later fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. It can scarcely be true both that in Europe "population levels by the 1340s were almost as high as they had been at the turn of the fourteenth century" (p30) and that "in much of the Christian world, the Black Death struck an already declining population" (p38). It is extremely eccentric to argue that "by 1530, the English population was about the same as it had been before the Black Death" (p.156); most informed commentators would place it around 50 per cent below the 1300 level. Less categorical but no less insidious is the heavy measure of *post hoc propter hoc* reasoning in Chapter 7, "Disease and the Transformation of

Medieval Europe", in which the Black Death and later population decline is proposed as a cause or "the cause" of revolutionary developments in a plethora of fields, ranging from government and politics, to science, technology and medicine. In addition this chapter repeats a large number of hoary old myths connected with the contention that the Black Death wiped out the practitioners of a wide range of skills and accomplishments, who proved to be irreplaceable. Thus "a large proportion of Europe's master masons" were killed, "the survivors were too few to train enough new craftsmen, and too few even to do much of the skilled work so characteristic of preplague Gothic architecture. The result was a general decline in architectural standards which would not be rectified until the late fifteenth century." The truth is that in this and many other areas the demand-side response was as important, if not more so, than the supply side. In other words post-plague society had a changed set of priorities and demands which in this instance led to new architectural forms, and the decorations which were applied to them.

Happily, there are parts of the book which offer interesting and valuable viewpoints. A thread which runs throughout the work is a welcome attention to environmental and biological factors. Too often disease is seen by historians as a matter of the human element alone, to the neglect of the micro-organisms which cause it and the vectors and their hosts which are often responsible for spreading it. The incidence of a particular disease like plague can depend to a considerable extent upon the behaviour of fleas and rodents, as well as upon climate. A chapter on the response of medical authorities to plague adds a dimension sometimes lacking in general works on the Black Death.

Yet this remains a deeply disappointing book, and we still await a convincing scholarly attempt to knit the ever-growing series of excellent local and particular studies into a comparative account of the impact of the worst outbreak of disease in recorded European history.

phemy and homosexuality, preferring to see him as merely rumbustious. Freeman thought the reign important because he believed that it was Rufus and his minister, Ranulf Flambard, who introduced the feudal system into England and divided the land into fiefs owing knight-service and the full range of feudal "incidents", such as reliefs, wardships and escheats, but his theory has so long been refuted, that Barlow does not even refer to it. It is a little surprising, however, that he does not discuss R. W. Southern's view of the importance of the reign, and of Flambard in particular, for the development of the royal administration and the systemization of writs such as *novel disseisin*. As it is, Barlow's claim is simply that "the importance of the reign is that it prevented the reign of Robert Curthose and assured the reign of Henry I".

Nevertheless, Barlow has written a very full life running to about 450 pages. Since Rufus was only about forty years of age when he died, and had reigned for only thirteen years, this length may in some ways seem excessive, but the truth is that Barlow's book is a great deal more than a life. One of its delights is the way in which the narrative frequently becomes discursive, so that (for example) the chapter on William's "Background and Youth" turns into a general discussion of the upbringing of noble and royal youths in this period. In addition the third, fourth and fifth chapters are not narratives at all but discussions of the manners and customs of the royal household, of the nobility, clergy and royal government, and of finance. In these discussions Barlow refuses to be inhibited by the chronological limits of the reign (1087-1100), discussing finance in the light of Domesday Book (1086) and the Pipe Roll of 1130, and the royal household in the light of the *Constitutio Domus Regis*, on which he provides the best commentary available anywhere, although its date is c.1136. The one subject

which he does confine to the limits of the reign is the church. This may be because it is only four years since he published his history of *The English Church, 1066-1154*, but the restriction has the effect of truncating the career of Archbishop Anselm (whom Barlow dislikes) and of making it difficult for the reader to see how his actions could have constituted part of a larger scheme.

This book is not for the general reader who wants to know more about Death in the Forest. It is an important study of the Anglo-Norman monarchy and the climax of Professor Barlow's work on eleventh and twelfth-century England. It bears his hallmark in the way in which it refuses to treat of church and state in watertight compartments, and in the many ways in which it throws light on old problems by the use of little-known sources. One may particularly notice the use of the *Vita Beati Simoni* to illuminate the position of the nobility; the account of medieval hunting, which employs a wide range of sources including *Tristan*; the Letters of John of Salisbury and the (fifteenth century) *Master of the Game* by Edward, Duke of York; and the erudite explanation of how Rufus came by his favourite epithet, "By the Holy Game of Luca". The appendices provide an Itinerary of the King and a list of sheriffs, two indispensable tools for the historian who have never been provided before, and an investigation into the number and identity of "The children of William I and Matilda" which must now supersede that in David Douglas-Williams's *The Conqueror*. There are also many helpful maps and genealogical tables, some attractive illustrations and (a most welcome boon) plenty of informative footnotes on the same page as the text. The author and publisher may both be congratulated for producing this definitive work attractively and at a price very reasonable.

Letters

Newspeak

Sir, - Roy Harris, in his article "The misunderstanding of Newspeak" (January 6), refers to "two 1983 examples where the concept of Newspeak is invoked", and goes on to discuss an article by myself, and one by Friedrich von Hayek, both from the features page of *The Times*. His justification for doing this is that both articles are introduced by a title referring to "Newspeak". It should perhaps be pointed out that neither article mentions this concept, nor does the longer version of Hayek's article, printed in the *Salisbury Review*, nor S. Professor Harris ought to know that titles in newspapers are chosen not by contributors, but by editors.

This would not matter, were it not for the fact that the reference to Newspeak enables Harris to brand both Hayek and myself (although not in terms of equal rudeness) with the charge of using Orwell's idea in order to simplify complex discussions, and to beg important questions. Harris writes as though we wish to win arguments by branding our opponents - using the word "Newspeak" as a piece of Newspeak, so to speak, in the way that the Novosti Press Agency uses the word "imperialist". This is not so. The fault lies rather with Harris, who uses the labels "left" and "right" with no consciousness that they misrepresent almost all serious political options, and who imagines himself to be arguing against something which he calls the "conservative, reactionary inspiration of the majority of 'indignant letter writers'". It is surely this kind of facile label-mongering, for which "reactionary" is the Pavlovian sequel to "conservative", and which seeks to identify opponents through caricature, that Orwell had in mind. Besides, as one of the principal causes of indignant letters in *The Times*, I can assure Harris that the times have changed.

Professor Harris is of course right to dismiss the idea that there might be a language of "plain representation". But many of us who have criticized the politicization of language by communists and feminists (to take two major instances) have not sought to argue that "plain representation" could ever be achieved. Our concern has been with the extent to which questions are begged, and discussions closed, by politically motivated changes in terminology. Harris acknowledges the existence of such a phenomenon. But if he wishes to acquire a conception of the disaster that it has entailed in the lives of ordinary people, he should look again at the society which inspired Orwell's original image of the future. He might usefully compare the language of the features page of *Pravda* with that of the features page of *The Times*.

ROGER SCRUTON,
6 Linden Gardens, London W2.

Orwell and his Publishers

Sir, - With reference to Michael Sheldon's article on Orwell and his publishers in your issue of January 6, your readers may be interested to know that in a television interview I asked Victor Gollancz whether he regretted having turned down *Animal Farm*, one of the very few books of our time sure to survive as a classic, in its case alongside *Gulliver's Travels*. He replied, more straightforwardly than I had anticipated, that as a publisher he regretted having refused to publish so distinguished a book, but that as a man of the Left he felt he had been justified. I believe that a number of other publishers for one reason or another turned down *Animal Farm*, among them Faber on the advice of T. S. Eliot.

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE,
Park Cottage, Robertsbridge, Sussex.

The Oakes Case

Sir, - James Leasor should have read his own words, and my review, more carefully. The "two serious factual errors" he discovers (Letters, January 6) are nothing of the kind. I said that Marshall, Mr Leasor's Mafia agent, "struggles to" (Oakes) to be dragged, and under a pretext takes him out to a launch moored on an island just outside Nassau. That is exactly what happens, as described on which, by today's standards, must be judged very reasonable.

relating to the bloodstained towel found in Harold Christie's bedroom by Major Pemberton, head of the local CID, a fact which I said was omitted, Mr Leasor is disingenuous when he says that he does mention the towel. So he does, but only in recounting Christie's evidence at the trial. He does not mention Pemberton's discovery of the towel, nor what I call "his strange forgetfulness about this in the Magistrates' Court hearing". By the time of the trial Christie had had time to get off the hook by providing an explanation, saying "I wet a towel and wiped his face. I believe the towel came from my bathroom."

For the rest, the facts Mr Leasor mentions provide no link between the principals in the case and the murder. All that is pure conjecture. The point of mentioning Marshall Houts's book was to show that the Leasor theory, so far as it concerned an agent of Meyer Lansky bearing chief responsibility for Oakes's death, was not original.

JULIAN SYMONS,
Groton House, 330 Dover Road, Walmer, Deal, Kent.

Raymond Aron

Sir, - Douglas Johnson erroneously begins his review (December 9, 1983) of my father, Raymond Aron's *Memoirs* with a reference to "his old friend from the 1930s", Bertrand de Jouvenel. Bertrand de Jouvenel and my father belonged to very different social and political milieus in the 1930s. Their relations began after the Second World War.

DOMINIQUE SCHNAPPER,
Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey 08540.

Judging Brecht

Sir, - Timothy Garton Ash, judging Brecht", said the cover of your issue of December 9. What would this mean, I wondered? Was this latest recruit to the vast army of writers on the subject about to discuss broad problems of Brecht criticism, or would he be reviewing judgments made in Ronald Hayman's new book? Was it Hayman or the whole lot of us who would prove to be the judges in question? It soon turned out to be neither. The gentleman in the long wig was Timothy Garton Ash.

The judgment which he handed down to us was a very long one, almost 120 inches (ten feet). It was not a review of the book, which was only sparsely referred to. Nor was it more than marginally a consideration of Brecht's achievement as poet, playwright and man of the theatre. Four-fifths of it (about eight feet by my count) concerned that great artist's presumed political views, statements and actions.

This sense of proportion will be familiar to anyone who was around at the time of the Cold War, when the Congress for Cultural Freedom (with CIA backing) systematically tried to discredit Brecht via *Der Monat*, *Forum*, *Encounter* and others of its stable of magazines. But a lot has happened since those glorious days, and maybe there is something new to say. Almost at the outset Ash leads one to assume that there must be, since he reprimands Hayman for taking no account of the last, posthumous volume of Brecht's poems, which have been appeared in 1982. Since this could well have been after Hayman's book went to press, the reader is led to think that Ash himself believes in being very up to date indeed.

Alas, this belief is not put into practice in the article, which exhumes one thirty-year-old allegation after another without looking at them afresh. So we have Brecht once again "enthroned [sic] in East Berlin, with a West German publisher, Austrian passport and Swiss bank account", as if this were still proof of unbelievable depravity. We have the "famous" alleged remark to Sidney Hook about the Moscow Trials, though it is now clear that it was made before the end of 1935, when the Great Purge and the show trials were still to come; nobody accustomed to Brecht finds it all that significant, though it would be interesting to know in what language it was made. We have the old, old view that *The Measures Taken* "uncannily anticipates the Moscow trials", without reference to the Japanese experiments of self-sacrifice on which it was in fact based. We have Brecht in his last years presented, as, in part, a "hopeless hack" who "wrote to order". Any evidence? No.

In all ten feet (three metres) of Mr Ash's judgment there was just one startlingly unfamiliar point, though with no indication of provenance or date. This was the suggestion that Brecht was offered - by whom? - a job with the Moscow Art Theatre, but preferred not "to risk his own neck". Does your reviewer not know enough about Brecht's theatrical principles to realize what a very odd idea this is? Surely it didn't come from Ronald Hayman? And why say "his own" neck unless one wishes to imply that he would have risked somebody else's? Whose judicial standards are these?

JOHN WILLET,
Volta House, Windmill Hill, London NW3.

Learned Journals

Sir, - Marilyn Butler's brief (December 16, 1983) was clearly an impossible one, as she could hardly mention all literary journals itemized in the *MLA Directory of Periodicals*. Yet we poor benighted aliens feel that less than justice has been rendered to the small but hardy band of Continental periodicals devoted to the study of "Anglistik und Amerikanistik" as our German colleagues put it. As editor of *Études Anglaises*, I can testify that ours is a weary struggle for yearly survival against the indifference or insidious hostility of higher educational authorities at present more interested in promoting the study of English for vocational purposes than the apparently futile scrutiny of literary works.

"Culture" is fast becoming an obscene word, and many so-called intellectuals reach for their revolvers when it is daringly mentioned, especially when not dealing with such modish topics as comic strips, pop songs or graffiti in public lavatories. May I suggest that, before we are all swept away by the tidal wave of scientific barbarism, the TLS take some notice of Continental literary journals? Let us hope that this census won't turn into a threat to defunct periodicals.

PAUL-GABRIEL BOUCE,
36 Avenue Rabalais, 92160 Antony, France.

Sir, - It can be well understood why to the Yale historian (Linda Colley, writing on history journals in your symposium of December 16, 1983) *Antiquity* should be seen as "marvellous". Probably nothing quite like its individuality and personal touch exists in any of the journals surveyed or unsurveyed by Professor Colley, on this or the other side of the Atlantic. It is salutary to recall that *Antiquity* was the unique creation of one man nearly sixty years ago, when archaeology was a gentlemanly study hardly yet besmirched by professionalism, and the survival of its exceptional character resulted from continuous control by that same creator, O. G. S. Crawford, for thirty years. He was open-minded, receptive to ideas, a "lateral" thinker. Because of his early geographical orientation he could associate widely dispersed archaeological facts without continually looking over his shoulder for heretical implications of extreme diffusionism. His discovery of archaeology "from the air" through the use of the aeroplane sixty years ago might have influenced his general outlook.

If the *Antiquity* of the years since Crawford continues to have a similar personal and intimate atmosphere, that again must be put down to the pervasive influence of one man, its editor since. One has to admit, however, that the cheerful latitudinarianism of Crawford's reign has waned under the baleful influences of "scientific" archaeology, radio-carbon dating and the scramble for priorities in mankind's early cultural achievements. It may be suspected that Crawford's wide-ranging perspective, seen in his essay in comparative ethno-prehistory, *The Eye Goddess*, would have received short shrift under the present dispensation.

C. E. JOEL,
47 Spencer Close, Potton, Bedfordshire

Milovan Djilas

Sir, - "Although Djilas can claim literacy as well as political importance..." Readers of this sentence in my review of Stephen Clissold's book on Djilas (December 30, 1983) may think me insufferably condescending. The word should be "literary" - a correction which I made in proof, but which failed to reach the published print.

R. K. KINDERSLEY,
St. Antony's College, Oxford.

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Oxford University Press

COMMENTARY

A martyr mismanaged

Richard Combs

Gorky Park
Leicester Square Theatre

Denied permission by the Soviet Union to film in the places where it happened, the adaptors of Martin Cruz Smith's *Gorky Park* found a stand-in for Moscow in another capital of the frozen North, Helsinki. The substitution would be acceptable enough were it not for two things. The most obvious is that Cruz Smith's novel depends less on the mechanics of its plot to hook the reader than on the circumstantial evidence of his many years' research, his feeling for the topography of Moscow and the texture of Russian life, the latter tinged with an anti-Soviet disdain that just about passes for the drabness and pessimism that is *de rigueur* in this genre wherever it is set. But, following from this, the film-makers have attempted a kind of pretend-realism, as if Helsinki were not just a substitute but Moscow-in-absentia, a setting where we are encouraged to accept as the real thing while not being given enough detail to convince us that anything is real. The problem is essentially one of style, or rather the lack of it. The director Michael Apted points a wide-angle lens indiscriminately at faces in conversation or figures in a crowd, as if a certain kind of TV roughness were enough to cover the basic contradiction of Helsinki-for-Moscow, or of accepting a Slavic cast in this undeniably Western-style policier.

The curious thing is that, according to an article in a recent *Sunday Times Magazine*, screenwriter Dennis Potter did have a definite stylistic model in mind. Potter characterized his source novel as a fat book which had "waddled into the bestseller lists". He then described his programme for stripping away the flab, having first determined that his subject should ideally cut the trim, fast-moving figure of classic detective fiction, that the mean streets down which the Soviet policeman hero must go should have an immediately identifiable, archetypal atmosphere, turning Moscow into another of Los Angeles's endless suburbs. This sounds fine in theory, but Potter has been unable to make the regimen work on screen, and his script really has no atmosphere at all. Disgruntled comments on Russian life jostle with baffled, over-emphatic stabs at describing such things as the rivalry between the KGB and

the civil police. The inertness of the writing is weirdly compounded by that peculiar trick of casting which has English character actors substitute for Russian "colour", as if making Russian militiamen, for instance, sound like the Z Cars squad room were a short-cut to international credibility.

It could be that so circumstantial a novel as *Gorky Park* resists the imposition of any stylistic model, as if what Cruz Smith had really achieved was a cunning marriage of the Russian novel of consciousness with the mechanics of detective fiction, distorting the latter out of all recognition and recall. The consciousness of the hero, Chief Investigator Arkady Renko, is more diffuse and more far-reaching than that of the detectives who give voice to the hard-boiled philosophy Potter is thinking of. Through his rogue cop, Cruz Smith interrogates a whole national culture, allowing his inherently and complacently pro-Western bias to shift unexpectedly when the action moves to the West, to New York, where a splitting of consciousness takes place. After wrapping up the villain, Renko decides that he must return to the Soviet Union and his lover remain in the West (in whose image she has not too attractively remade herself). When William Hurt's Renko announces at the end of the film that he will always be a Russian, one is surprised mainly because the question had not seemed previously to come up. By deleting the New York sequence (or providing another neutral Scandinavian substitute, Stockholm), Potter has prevented the story from confronting its own attitudes towards East and West, and the film consequently seems more simple-mindedly anti-Soviet. One suspects finally that Potter has merely plumped for the wrong model. Renko, after all, is not a private eye but a cop; his attitudes towards and implication in the authoritarian state are more complex. By deleting just New York but the sequence where Renko convalesces after a near-fatal attack by his erstwhile superior turned villain, Potter seems clearly to have misunderstood the psychology of the role. And in the psychology of the role rather than the sense of the plot lies the only meaning of the story. As it happens, there are cinematic as opposed to literary precedents for Arkady Renko: he is, one feels, closer kin to a tortured martyr of the system like Dirty Harry than a cynical outsider like Philip Marlowe.

Inevitable violence

Pat Raine

The Honorary Consul
Classic, Haymarket

A bungled kidnapping, on the frontier between Paraguay and Argentina, is at the centre of Graham Greene's novel *The Honorary Consul*, published in 1973 and now made into a film, with Michael Caine performing impressively in the title role, and Richard Gere contributing an allure entirely his own to the character of Doctor Plarr. As we might expect from a screen adaptation, there's a loss in irony and subtlety, and a gain in gloss. The effect procured by high-grade photography quite often runs counter to the quality of disappellation the novelist specifies. While the book is bleak, and even, occasionally brutal in feeling, the film (directed by John Mackenzie, with a screenplay by Christopher Hampton) doesn't eschew sentimentality, or is inverse, for that matter, incorporating acts of military and police aggression to underline the point about justifiable insurgency. However, give or take a character or two, and allowing for the necessary simplification involved in the epilogue, it keeps commendably close to the original plot.

Thus, as Greene has said, reflects his abiding concern with the possibility of social change. The setting is Corrientes (the film has a consequence of the Falklands crisis, was done in Mexico, in and around Veracruz), a town that contains three English inhabitants. If we include the half-Paraguayan Doctor Eduardo Plarr, it is Plarr's preoccupation with the fate of his father, an English liberal who allied him-

self with Paraguay's revolutionary forces, and disappeared, that gets the doctor, greatly against his inclinations, into a conspiracy to hold the American Ambassador to ransom for the release of thirty political prisoners. Things go wrong for the conspirators; instead of the important ambassador an unimportant British consul falls into their amateurish hands. ("On our side we are all amateurs", one of them defends himself. "The police and the soldiers are the professionals.") One of the things that interest the author is the interrelation between Doctor Plarr, whose emotional responses are in a sense anaesthetized, and Charley Fortnum, amiably alcoholic and ineffectual, but capable none the less of simple generosity and goodness. Fortnum, the honorary consul, has rescued from the local brothel an Indian girl named Clara, and married her; her subsequent affair with Doctor Plarr adds complexity to the novel, and supplies the necessary romantic and erotic episodes for the scriptwriter. The acting of Euphelia Carrillo, who plays Clara, is adequate for the part, which isn't exacting. Like that of the majority of Graham Greene's female characters, Clara's behaviour is of less consequence, with regard to the plot, than the behaviour she evokes in others. Her foreignness and simplicity are made virtually impenetrable.

What goes to make a political agitator is another matter, and one that gets extensive consideration in the novel at least. Another of Greene's observations, that "violence is an inevitable consequence of the state of the world we live in", is borne out by the conditions postulated here. His primary revolutionary is an ex-priest (Joachim de Almeida in the film),

The periodicals, 10: History Today

Bruce Lenman

JULIET GARDINER (Editor)
History Today
Volume 33, December 1983, £1.

History Today differs fundamentally from the mass of other historical journals. They differ from one another in terms of subject or area coverage, or in reflecting the particular point of view of a given school of professional historians. In a subject where it is happily still possible for a professional in good standing with his fellows to publish books through major commercial publishers, the journals tend to be thought of as the home of rigorous technical scholarship. Students are urged to submit themselves to "the necessary discipline of the learned article". Were the subject to lose its ability to appeal to a broad general readership the learned journals would become the subject. The idea that this cannot possibly happen is tempting but illusory, for it tends to happen all the time in particular areas of history. The transition from the sort of economic history that R. H. Tawney wrote to the much more rigorous scholarship of the generation of, say, his successor in the University of London, F. J. Fisher, and then to the heavily mathematical world of the younger econometricians, has been a process marked by a heavy, though of course not an absolute, swing of emphasis from the book as the standard means of communication to the learned periodical.

History Today is committed to respecting no particular temporal or geographical limits, and it is absolutely committed to appealing to an audience beyond the restricted one of academic historians. A journal which is thus bent on upholding the role of history as part of the general culture of the contemporary educated and aware person necessarily faces dilemmas commensurate with the scope and worthiness of its aims. It is doomed to an endless war against shapelessness, for its potential field is infinite, and it is always in danger of being too obscure for the general reader or too superficial for the professional scholar. Presumably this problem as to the market aimed at is one of the explanations for the fairly disturbed recent editorial history of the journal. After the lengthy editorship of Peter Quennell it was edited by Michael Crowder, who

adapted a much more ambitious and better illustrated format. The magazine was then sold by its publisher, and now appears under the editorship of Michael Crowder's former colleague Juliet Gardiner.

Two obvious ways of shaping an issue are to select an appropriate anniversary, such as that of the American Revolution or the Reformation, and to ask for contributions from those who have written or are writing on the topic. The latest issue takes the alternative approach of nominating a theme - in this case that of Britain's largely vanished herring fishery. I must at once own to a personal interest in the subject, for my grandfather arrived in Aberdeen early in this century as a stowaway in the lifeboat of the Cooperative Society coalboat, with a view to seeking the work he could not find in his native East Anglia. The attraction to Aberdeen was because of its booming trading industry. It was always a vulnerable trade. J. L. Duthie, in a fascinating piece on the fishermen's religious revival of 1921 in north-east Scotland, shows it against a background of appalling economic dislocation and distress. Paul Thompson surveys the social realities of the fisher communities in Shetland, Lewis and Aberdeen. The independent-minded Shetlanders have been the survivors in an industry virtually destroyed by the closing of fishing grounds and the catastrophic European industrial over-fishing of what was left. It is not just industrial jobs which are vanishing in contemporary Britain. The collapse of our wood pulp industry and the slow strangulation of what is left of our fisheries are a reminder that extractive industries are collapsing too.

A piece on Isaac Walton by John Lowerson wittily reminds us that angling became an emotional escape for many from the realities of Victorian industry, and in the case of Mark Pattison from academic bloody-mindedness. There are articles on Luther, fiction in Stuart England, international economic cooperation after 1945, and on the modern literature of the Hellenistic World. Book reviews also feature prominently, as they should, but it is for its major pieces on "Living the Fishing" that this issue will be remembered and will deserve to be remembered. For they succeed in bringing out both the relevance and the potentially wide appeal of history when it is well written by authors with a real sense of the social reality behind political or economic events.

AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 156

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than February 3. A prize of £10 is offered for the correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling correct set of answers opened on that date.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 156" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on February 10.

1 Regard the moon. It hangs above the lawn. Regard the lawn. It lies beneath the moon.

2 Regard the moon.
La lune ne garde aucune rancune.
She winks a feeble eye.
She smiles into corners.
She smooths the hair of the grass.
The moon has lost her memory.

3 I am aware of this moon: would he would change.

Competition No 153

No entries were submitted
Answers:

1 A spiritually-minded person, with a fine show of collar-bone and a pretty taste in champagne; liked to dry you understand, and plenty of it.
Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, part 1, chapter 10.
2 I never saw so much champagne drunk so quickly.
Toni Richard and brought him in and we drank large quantities of a dangerous mixture by which which consisted chiefly of champagne, gin and absinthe.

3 Evelyn Waugh, diary, October 25, 1925.
4 And the small ripple split upon the beach. Scarcely o'pressed the cream of your champagne. When o'er the brim the sparkling pumbers reach. That spring-dawn of the spirit, the beer's life. Lord Byron, *Don Juan*, canto 2, stanza 19.

Breaking up the unhappy home

Peter Laslett

BRIGITTE BERGER and PETER L. BERGER
The War Over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground
252pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.
009 1532108

There is indeed a war over the family. In the consciousness-raising meetings of the feminists, in the print-out-littered offices of the welfare ministries and the census bureaux, at the constant international gatherings of the academics, its strategies are planned and its battles engaged. At party conferences also, and even in the Cabinet offices themselves, the talk is frequently of drooping birth-rates, one-parent families, the burden of the elderly, with its menacing prospects for the future, and incessantly of the decline in familial values. No subject is more easily entered into, on none is it easier to hold and express an opinion, and on none is there more ignorance, prejudice and misinformation.

On no subject, therefore, is it more difficult to write a clear, enlightening and persuasive book. If you can bring yourself to read this essay by two senior American sociologists you will find something of such a character in it, a useful and thoughtful guide to the horrendous array of up-to-the-minute "literature" on the family. Although it seems to me to be studded with naïvetés and with misapprehensions, and finally inadequate to its portentous theme, the obvious obstacles are for the most part of a literary character. The English reader is to be warned that he enters a cavern of limp expressions, as far removed from the abrupt phraseology of the American sports writer as it is from the language actually used in the family, in any family, anywhere, at any time.

But the English reader has another hurdle to get over. He will find himself at the outset brusquely consigned to the ranks of those who follow where imperial America leads. "The United States", we are told, continues to be the hegemonic culture in the contemporary world. The "problems" thought up by Ivy League intellectuals, New York media-types and Washington politicians today in the area of culture and social change are the problems of the world. The authors of this book conscientiously strive to apprehend advances made on the topic in the Old World, they misunderstand and misapply the findings. They get themselves into the position of arguing, for example, that something which they insist on calling the bourgeois family was foisted upon a reluctant social structure in early modern Europe, and yet contained, and still contains, values and practices which in the 1980s all of us would do well to retain and to reinforce. Let us turn to what it is that the war over the family is about, and look at it in European terms, our terms.

The arguments have been much rehearsed, and we need to do no more than summarize. In the first place, and by the libertarians, especially the champions of women, the family has been condemned as the oldest, strongest weapon of oppression. It oppresses the underclass because in its bourgeois form it is the instrument of property-ownership and of the hoarding of property-ownership with one mother. It oppresses children because it treats them as non-persons, owned by their parents, and it oppresses women by denying them individuality and full citizenship. Familial oppression proceeds by force, of course, by the immense power stored up over the millennia in the patriarchal, phallogocentric social system. It

justifies itself by the dogmatic assertion that the family is a natural institution, biologically and socially natural, over which there is no choice. The family enforces monogamy, forbids control of births, especially by abortion, outlaws homosexuality and exorates the homosexual. Every move towards individualism and freedom has to begin by an attack on familial authority. Every move in a conservative direction has to insist correspondingly on a return to familial values, on the self-evident truth that the nuclear family is the building block of society, so that to weaken it is to menace everyone's security; and to abolish it is to take away our humanity.

Especially in so laconic a form these may seem overheated arguments. But here are some of the reasons why Plato and all really radical Utopians, especially Marxian revolutionaries in the early days of revolutionary success, proclaim that the family should be abolished. These are the grounds on which R. D. Laing and others have called for the death of the family and why Shulamith Firestone asserts that "sexism represents the oldest, most rigid class caste system in existence", or Yoko Ono that "woman is the nigger of the world". It is one of the interesting features of the present war over the family that leaders on the radical side are quite frank in condemning the Marxist tradition for its blindness to every element in familial oppressiveness except its connection with property. This is admirably brought out in the best of the radical books on the subject, Mark Poster's *Critical Theory of the Family*, published in 1978 and perhaps the most interesting of all the recent works. But we have yet to refer to two other sets of ideological combatants at present active on the field.

One of these warrior bands, so our authors inform us with complacency, is that palladium of all sociological speculation, a *New Class*. A "knowledge class" they call it, of experts, educators, technicians, intellectuals, whose rising social power is on the way towards control of the Soviet Union and of the other so-called socialist societies as well as of a great deal of Western society too. They are backed up in this belief by a range of American social scientists, such as Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset and Alvin W. Gouldner. It does not appear to worry this intellectual choir that the theory of social change brought about by the rise to victorious control of new classes is no longer held to be a self-evident truth by historians.

However that may be, the *New Class* is up in arms about the family because it does its job of social reproduction so badly. Experts will have to take over from father and from mother. Proposals have been made in the US anyway, though Donzelot talks in a similar way about France, "for mandatory day-care of all welfare recipients, the licensing of all new parents, required parental education in public high schools". 1984 does indeed seem to be close. In the People's Republic of China, with the campaign to enforce the one-child family, it is surely already here.

The last set of combatants whom we can mention are the demographers, campaigning not so much in their own persons as staff officers of politicians and propagandists, in or out of office. There are many conflicting voices and opinions in this part of the European battle-field, but the cry for more marriages and more births is now to be heard from nearly all countries. In France and in Germany it is rising to a crescendo, almost to a shriek. For in practically every society on our continent - Ireland and Greece are still not among them - the native replacement rate is now negative.

Already the oldest societies which have ever existed, it seems inevitable that the continued short-fall of births will make them older still, and that within a decade or two in some of them population stagnation will be succeeded by population decline. "La Rafus de la vie" is what the most voliferous of the French spokesmen call it. By this is meant the demonstrably growing practice of cohabitation without marriage and without children, and with persons of either sex; ever-increasing divorce, now half or more as common in Britain as marriage itself; the extraordinary frequency of abortion and the supposedly almost universal indifference to familial values and imperatives. When it is remembered how passionately European people have always felt about the size and the age of

their populations in the past, especially the French, this tremendous outcry is just what we should expect. We should also expect it to appear in blank, black-and-white, moralistic terms.

There is much to say in response to the book of familial lamentations all the same. The historical sociologist is disposed to smile a little wryly at the supposition that the family is a contrivance of a kind which could disappear, or be abolished, or effectively remoulded by social engineering. If the alleged new class really thinks like this, or any disaffected members of it, then the Utopian unreality of Plato and Engels blinds to reality as much as ever it did. To suppose, as conservatives seem or need to do, that there ever was a world we have lost in which Christian procreative doctrine was universally obeyed, in any European country in any century, is simply a mistake. It is an illusion brought about by reading the pronouncements of ideologists of the past as if they were objective analysis. Almost every one of the symptoms which are found so frightening has existed before, and become more or less prevalent from time to time.

So also has the tendency to read the most discouraging interpretation of what is known of contemporary fact as the inescapable tendency of the future. No one knows for example if the "moral" are in a majority in the US or in Britain. But one only has to consider what happened to Cecil Parkinson to recognize that practical politicians have to conduct themselves as if it were so. Living in the approved man-wife-childern group is less appropriate than it has ever been before, for demographic and other reasons. But it is also true that those who do have the opportunity welcome it, for the most part find this way of life eminently satisfactory and will defend the habits and attitudes which go with it. To all this has to be added the fact that for all their sophistication demographic projections are never entirely reliable. The subject being specialist, nearly everyone can be misled by its carefully qualified pronouncements.

Nevertheless there are several features of our present condition in Europe which are quite without past precedent and which are peculiarly calculated to exacerbate the war over the family. One is the case for supposing that in high industrial societies like our own it is almost certainly the exit of the mother or potential mother from the home to take her rightful place in employment which will ensure that replacement rates will never rise much above unity again, and are not unlikely to become negative and remain so. In fact, high industrial economies seem to be organizing themselves in such a way that two incomes are entirely necessary in order to support the prevalent standard of living, at all social levels. They are also settling down, apparently, to a situation where high unemployment, entirely uncondemned to procreative familial life, is an inbuilt institution.

There are further novelties in our condition which can, and seemingly must, arouse even uglier passions. At a recent meeting on age and employment in Western Europe, a delegate from Hungary questioned whether the agonizing over senescence and prospective population decline was not to some extent the newest form of class antagonism and racism amongst Western peoples. To appreciate the second

suggestion, it is only necessary to recognize that France would have declined in numbers, become even older, in the inter-war years, if it had not been for the immigration and naturalization of millions of foreigners - European foreigners.

If France could now bring itself to accept the North Africans who have flooded into the red belt round its capital, and who are now so fiercely resented by the Front National, and to take more people like them, its "population problem" could perhaps be settled again. Britain, we may notice, might well have suffered decline in population, and an even greater ageing, if it had not been for the West Indian, the Pakistani and the Indian immigrants.

We know very well that we are in no position to reproach France for racism in our common situation, or for the recrudescence of fascism which this situation has helped to provoke. Germany, worst placed demographically of all the European nations, could no doubt go far to solve its "problem" by selective immigration. But - and here is the crucial difference from the past - this could not be of immigrants of European stock. It would have to be *Gdstarbeiter* and those who would follow them, Turkish and other Near-Easterners and North Africans. No one is anxious to meddle with racist feelings and racist politics in that part of Europe.

Because they do not see things from the European angle, Berger and Berger do not address themselves to these ever more ominous implications of the fact that there is a war on over the family. They do pick their way through the issues of abortion, of the feminist protest - which is surely the noblest and weightiest issue of them all - of the irreplacibility of "traditional" (misused by them "bourgeois") familial relationships and values for the adequate development of personality, and lesser preoccupations like democracy and the family, and the possibility of decadence. There is an earnest superficiality about some of the discussion and a historical shallowness which make the reader disposed to decide that the theme is too demanding for them. It may be so for anybody, writing now, at the time at which it is just beginning to dawn on the inhabitants of the high industrial parts of the world that they are living in a social structure which is inappropriate to their condition, their demographic condition, and above all to their entirely unprecedented distribution by age.

Europe will never be young again; it is very unlikely to gain in population again; its familial system will never again be represented at all properly by the group of father, mother and young children. We have simply ceased to live in these respects as all previous societies have lived. As Europe is today, so the United States and Japan will be tomorrow, and so finally in the later part of the next century will be the people of Africa and Asia.

This is not the opportunity to attempt to recount the reasons why all this is so, or to enter into the details of the lag between what we feel we ought to be and what in fact we manifestly are, in social structural terms. Let us simply agree that one way of looking at *The War over the Family* is to lose all sense of surprise that such a war should exist and be so pitiless a fact of our time, so unlikely to be solved in a satisfactory way.

Rural reports

John Cherrington

CLIFFORD MORSELEY
News from the English Countryside 1851-1950
288pp. Harrap. £10.95.
0245 540083

This is an interesting and entertaining book, but it could have been much better. The idea is a good one - to collect the rural history of the century between 1850 and 1950 as told in the pages of provincial newspapers. So we are given accounts of wife-selling, public executions, the exorcism of a witch's influence by burning a pig's heart up the chimney, the formation of the first farm labourers Union, a

hiring fair. Sleeping and living in one's coffin seems to have been quite popular in the period - although I myself know of at least two cases in quite recent years where wealthy eccentrics enjoyed their coffin; one used to make his estate staff carry him in it to the church every Saturday morning.

But for a book dealing with the countryside of the period *News from the English Countryside* lacks an understanding of the fundamental changes in the rural economy which followed the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. There are, it is true, accounts of the depressingly low level of wages and the hardships of the lower-paid or even those not paid at all. But the causes of much of this misery - the result of the opening of the British market to unrestricted imports - are not discussed.

Fascination by facts

Roger Moss

MAXIMILIAN E. NOVAK
Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction
181pp. University of Nebraska Press. £13.60.
0 8052 3307 8

LENNARD J. DAVIS
Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel
245pp. Guildford: Columbia University Press.
£21.50 (\$12 paperback).
0231 054203

ELIZABETH DEEDS ERMARTH
Realism and Consensus in the English Novel
278pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.
£23.
0691 065068

In the best of these books Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth's *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel*, a point is made about the orphan-status of so many of the heroes and heroines of realist novels, and the link between that and an ethic of self-identification. The point can be applied to the novel itself. Orphans, bastards, foundlings, parvenus – novels are full of them, and at one level they would seem to reflect doubt about the novel's own literary parentage, its own legitimacy. Doubt and complicity; for, just as there is nothing worse than the self-made man, so there is at times an intolerable smugness in the ease with which novelists come to accept their self-made literary supremacy, and in the willingness with which critics of the novel refrain from asking awkward questions.

Professor Ermarth is the least willing of these three critics to expose the lowly world into which the novel was born, but even she concedes that there is a connection between the discourses of realism and of gossip. Add gossip to a list garnered from the other books – ballads, jests, sensational journalism, crime-literature – and you have the means by which an increasingly pluralist society, from the end of the sixteenth century onwards, was able to deal with all its oddities and upheavals by shutting them off within the myth-making language of the "fascinating fact".

What is remarkable is the way that overt fiction is taught up in the same process. In little more than a century, story-telling turns from the role of ushering its audience into the realm of the imagination to that of guessing with them what might be going on behind an imaginary neighbour's curtains. It might be possible to construe this as part of that healthy process whereby high art renews and refreshes itself by dipping into the resources of popular tradition. This is a theory of artistic change that has been best explored by Bakhtin in relation to Rabelais and Dostoevsky. But it does not work for the realist novel, not in England anyway. For the English novel does not dip into the demotic, it absorbs it wholesale, in the process destroying a huge fund of popular tale-telling, common knowledge and lore, and completely reconstructing the relationships between literature and ordinary life and art, as well as those between fiction-making and the real world. Having locked literature into these new relationships, it then throws away the key of convention, so that the freedom to move between self-evident literary conventions is constrained by the way that realism presents itself as evidence of convention or anti-convention.

Which brings me to the various frustrations of these three books. Maximilian E. Novak's *Realism, Myth, and History in Defoe's Fiction* gives us the most hard evidence of the novel's involvement in a world of low discourse, and of the dubious legitimacy (at many levels) of the "father" of the English novel, Defoe. But Novak does this almost inadvertently, and certainly without any wish to interrogate the large and important terms of his title. The book is really a celebration of Defoe, rather than an enquiry into his importances or into the ambiguous status of realism. It is at its best when Novak's intimate knowledge of his subject is displayed in a profusion of anecdotes about the way that *Robinson Crusoe* or *Defoe's* crime-writing belongs to Defoe's other world of news sheets, rather than to the world of the mercantile novel. Yet even here, the description of Defoe as the "mythologist of the

crime-wave", or of the mythical resonances of *Crusoe*, is tantalizing rather than instructive, since little is said to develop the inherent theoretical interest of such terms. It is much less good when the literary coherence of *Moll Flanders* or *Roxana* is being argued for, because here, as with the recurrent praise of Defoe's "genius", "amazing wit and intelligence" or "skill", Novak's enthusiasm blinds him to the need to provide comparative grounds for his assertions.

Factual Fictions at least elaborates a more broadly based theoretical position; Lennard J. Davis understands the inherent duplicity of the novel, and sees the need to examine in detail its dubious parentage. His particular quarry is the habit of early novelists of presenting their fictions as fact. His real subject is therefore still Defoe, though he extends this to include Richardson and Fielding, more by loose analogy than substantial links. In this enterprise, he could have done with some of Professor Novak's attention to detail, to offset his own tendency towards a fussy over-sophistication which masquerades as theoretical refinement. Certainly, he could have spent more profitable time worrying over terms like "fact", "fiction" and "reality", than by setting out with an enquiry into the possible significance of the term "beginning". When he appears to find the notion of a lie, like Defoe's in *Roxana*, epistemologically more complex than Cervantes's paradoxes of self-reference in *Don Quixote*, the need for such clarification becomes urgent. And when he follows this by asserting that such self-reference is a result of the new typography – dismissing Homer's Demodokos and Chaucer's Chaucer at a stroke – the reader's confidence in his judgments begins rapidly to fade away.

It would be pleasing to be able to say that Davis was better on his own territory. But this would be to assume that he had identified an interesting problem, which is not finally clear. Only in the tenth chapter does he glance at the possibility that all this talk about factuality from the sixteenth century onwards, may arise from a desire to make works seem more realistic, and to announce this desire to readers. His answer is that the term "realism" was not current during that time. But this is precisely the point: lacking the term, and having a glimmering of the concept, writers might very well have fallen back on the clumsy, but available, terminology of "fact" as opposed to "fiction". It is a possibility that Davis could have entertained more seriously without being required to abandon his subject. On the contrary, it could have kept that subject more clearly in focus, and treated the problematic status of "fact" in fiction with some of the real interest it deserves.

As it is, whatever interest it might have been defeated by Davis's taste for ugly and unhelpful terms like "news/novel discourse", and by his avid reading of prefaces rather than novels. His repeated analysis of the ambiguities within prefaces is dull, because prefaces tend to be dull. But it is also surprisingly naive, for a book of this kind, in that it notices the ambiguities within, but not the ambiguity of, prefaces, consistently treating them as critical expositions on a par with his own, rather than as contrivances of the fiction itself.

Five or ten years ago, this book might have been offered as a modest guide to an unregarded aspect of the novel's development, with useful information and some relevant analysis. Its essentially empiricist cast of mind would not have been disguised by so much methodological self-consciousness, or over-stretched by such needless self-importance.

Professor Ermarth's *Realism and Consensus*, by contrast, is a model of conceptual clarity. She has utilized her reading of modern theory in an independent way to construct a view of realism that is all the more impressive for being built out of such simple materials. A past-tense narrative and an impersonal narrator – these, along with a well-informed reading of Renaissance perspective theory, are the constituents of a fictional method which enforces a coherent ethic. "Consensus" is the name that Ermarth gives to this, form as well as meaning, and it is the essence of her powerful advocacy of the realist novel. As she goes, she knocks down one by one some revered assumptions about realism: the godlike narrator, the persona of the narrative voice, the distinction between first and third-person narratives, the connection between realism and social cohesiveness, are among the victims of her assured demolition-work. In their place, she offers the redeeming and revelatory power of time, the assurance of depth arising from a multiplicity of viewpoints, and the need for distance in order to attain knowledge, as the characteristics of "consensus".

At the same time, her book contains some very thorough analysis, and is, for example, consistently sensitive to the metaphorical relationships between characters in the novels and their roles as "readers" or "creators" of lives. The particular frustration of *Realism and Consensus*, then, is that despite all this conceptual

subtlety and the willingness to make profitable use of ideas such as literary reflexivity, it is still radically unwilling to question the novel's status and the determinants of literary realism. Indeed, Ermarth's implicit idea of historical development is the old one of progress, from which the realist novel emerges triumphant. Her references to perspectival theory do not really constitute historical argument so much as an analogy, since there is presumably a painful and continuous process by which these sixteenth-century ideas about vision emerge in eighteenth and nineteenth-century narratives. The use of such an analogy, in fact, looks worryingly like the theory she describes, where an illusion of depth is created by the intersection of two arbitrary planes of vision. The real depths from which the novel comes are left unsounded.

As the analytical chapters proceed, the instinctive teleology of her argument becomes plain. As of old, eighteenth-century novels are given marks for effort. But the main victim of Ermarth's scheme is Jane Austen. Her resistance to notions of consensus is construed as a resistance to realism, and only in *Persuasion* are there enough signs of strain in the social hierarchy, and in the cohesion between public and private values, for it to be seen as a breakthrough into consensus and, therefore, into realism.

Ermarth's "consensus" is really my "complicity" seen in a favourable light, and this must explain my doubts about what is an intelligent and forceful book. "If enough people had shared enough information", she tells us, Jo the crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House* need not have died. What she does not comment on is the structural incapacity of the realist novel to represent the terms by which many a Jo must die in a society organized like that of *Bleak House*. Jo is excluded from consensus for the sake of sentiment, and if we do not notice that, it seems to me that we collude in his death and in his exclusion. What is worrying about Ermarth's book is that she has put all her sophistication and intellectual range at the service of an argument that does not merely endorse moments like Jo's death, but which confirms the whole received view of the realist novel in sharper and fresher terms. Critical consensus (reads dangerously close upon critical complicity. I do not say this to impugn Ermarth's integrity or to detract from her book, but rather to underline the power of realistic conventions and the difficulty of working intelligently and persuasively outside them.

miro he sought to escape. "In the labor of self-presentation, rather than in a transcendently achieved laureate self, *The Works of Ben Jonson* find their true, though unacknowledged, center."

The reasonableness of his vision of the past becomes deeply imaginative as he tackles his subjects. In Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* he sees Colin as the poet Spenser might have become and refused to. Spenser rejects the amateur courtly tradition for a hard-working and longer-lived professionalism. He does not disavow poetry as a youthful folly but claims for it a central cultural place. Here as elsewhere, Helgerson's approach is hot as revolutionary as the claims; but he writes with unusual sympathy. Spenser is unable to sustain the role he creates: the intrusion of current events into Book V of *The Faerie Queene* shows that a greater distance from power is needed. That Colin Clout's vision tends to "diarm and disable" Calidore in Book VI shows that the private and public have come apart, and Spenser aptly ends in the private contemplation of mutability. His career provides a model for what poets might become, but evades the tensions of that possibility.

For Ben Jonson things are harder. Spenser has already lived, and where poetry had been its own justification, it must now be authorized by learning. Jonson finds the major modes of epic and pastoral effectively closed to him, and rather than beginning with eulogies he opts for satire. The satirist is potentially a moral centre, Jonson's problem is that the genre to which he is confined deny him sublimity; and his artistry denies his ambition: we revel in the criminal he depicted, and his vanity leaves him in the

The name of the game

Allan Mackie

JAN MARK
Handles
132 pp. Kestrel. £5.50.
0726 58575

Handles ends with its heroine, Erica, on the top deck of a bus leaving the Norfolkshire village of Polthorpe.

The alley was just opposite her window and she looked along it. As if through a telescope she saw the Gremmle prodding in the distance, and Panda searching for frogs, while down below Bunny looked hurriedly at his watch as he turned the corner and scudded massively down the alley. She looked for Eric, and did not see him. He must be already in his shop, already at work; it was all going on without her, and always would, unless she could get back again.

Erica presides over a domain of nicknames, the "handles" of the title, which has become Erica's bolt-hole during an unexpected holiday with some appalling relations in Calstead: his kingdom is a dilapidated motor-cycle repair shop.

Erica lives in Norwich, which for her consists of the motor cycle park and the multi-storey car park close to the vividly described market. Her love of motor cycles is lightly but persuasively sketched in, a love not understood by her family. To be sent into the country is to be exiled. "The countryside looked very different from the top of a bus; there was more of it, for a start, and it seemed rather flat after the hills of

Norwich." Very flat, Norfolk: Erica's most interesting contact with it at first is a vision of man-eating marrows, but by chance her aunt sends her into Polthorpe to collect jump-leads for Uncle Peter. She goes to the industrial estate, "drawn on by visions of factories, floodlights, great double gates and chain-link fences", to discover an alley with half-a-dozen tumble-down premises, and the astounding Elsie.

"Along the alley from the street came a frog on a Honda." The frog turns out to be a man in a green boiler-suit and helmet called Kermit. "Was the frog called Kermit because he looked like a frog, or had he grown to look like a frog because he was called Kermit?" The puzzling relation between imagination and reality is the heart of this very funny and ultimately very moving novel. Erica is at first enchanted, but must undergo a brutal disenchantment by embarrassment before she leaves. "The Cave was just a run-down repair shop. Bunny was Bernard, too fat in his boilersuit, and Elsie was only a man whose wife was angry with him. Erica did not know why she was angry and did not know what to think, and for the first time in weeks wished herself safely back in Calstead." The novel's ending is, after this, a triumph for the chastened and educated imagination, and for its author. Jan Mark has achieved an archetypal image of the good place of fantasy in a physically, socially and emotionally realistic framework, which makes her story instructive as well as entertaining and far more deeply engaging than its light tone leads us to expect.



In *The Glorious Flight* (39pp. Hutchinson. £5.95. 0 09 154300 2) Alice and Martin Provensen have scaled down the epic story of Louis Blériot's cross-Channel flight of 1909 in order to suit the requirements of the picture-book. Papa Blériot (seen here at the controls of Blériot XI) receives his original inspiration from the clackety clackety of an airship in 1901; overcomes years of prototypes, crashes and sprains; kisses his children Alceste, Charmaine, Suzette, Jeannot, Gabrielle and Mamma Blériot and takes off for Dover and a triumphant thirty-seven minute flight. The witty and original text makes sense of the story and the faux-naïf illustrations, in which the horizon is dangerously tilted, aptly convey the romance of flight.

Slugs and snails

Linda Taylor

DIANA COLES
The Clever Princess
Illustrated by Ros Asquith
51pp. Sheba Feminist Publishers. £2.50.
0907 179 207

The fairy tale is a moral fable; good conquers evil. And it is not unusual for femaleness to be equated with goodness – the sugar and spice and all things nice theory. For fairy-tale princesses, however, niceness has, too often, been identified with passivity. In *The Clever Princess*, Diana Coles aims to put back the spice in goodness.

Knowledge is the key: Princess Arete, the heroine, is good because she is clever. In the best sense of that word, she is skilful and dextrous (at painting and sewing), intelligent and quick-witted (she cheek-makes Prince Dulla-laine in twelve moves). She has the information to know that an enchanted lair slithering with pythons is not dangerous; the patience and understanding to tame a wild mare; the cunning to outwit a blood-lusting golden eagle (and, of course). Thus, she fulfils the three (apparently impossible) tasks set by her magical husband, Boax (her miserly father has sold her into marriage for a pile of jewels); she takes her head chopped off, lives to see the kingdom democratically won by Boax's son, Prince Ample, and her old white withered

body. "We'll all put our heads together and between us, we'll be able to think of some really sensible laws."

The radical feminist kingdom will be non-competitive and non-aggressive; intelligent, understanding and kind. In terms of "goodness", the utopian future is not a million miles removed from the benign autocracy envisaged at the end of the old fairy tales. The female slant is traditional – in pantomime, the good prince is a woman in disguise, the ugly sisters and their like; men to disguise. Coles's political point is more innovative. It is a shame that her communist ideal is only slipped in at the end and that it is blurred by the fact that, in her story, there is no room for the good guy – all the male characters are boring, stupid, aggressive and cowardly.

The Clever Princess, though, is a nicely constructed story, well told and funny, and with a lot of stuff about eating and good sense, it will appeal to the rational (and somewhat greedy) seven to ten year old. The illustrations by Ros Asquith are splendidly detailed (one small point – the pedantic child will be irritated by the fact that the pictorial representation of Mrs Ample's trayful of food in no way matches what Coles says Princess Arete had for dinner). But it's a bleak psychological outlook for the boys. Although the androgynous pictures of Princess Arete might give them some comfort, the unremitting nastiness of the Boaxes and the Dulla-bores will, I fear, only confirm their (and everyone else's) opinion that they are made of slugs and snails and puppy dogs' tails.

Through the mail

Sarah Hayes

BEVERLY CLEARY
Dear Mr Henshaw
134pp. Julia MacRae Books. £5.95.
0 86203 1478

In *Dear Mr Henshaw* Beverly Cleary has had the nice idea of making a novel out of letters written over a year or so by a boy reader (Leigh Botts) to his favourite author (Boyd Henshaw). In fact for a while it seems to be the only author, indeed the only book (*Ways to Amuse a Dog*) that the boy has ever read – presumably a situation familiar to the author as an ex-teacher. The correspondence is one way, although the boy Leigh does refer to Mr Henshaw's intermittent replies. In particular the occasion on which the worm turns, and the boy has to answer a whole load of questions about himself. One cannot help wondering if Cleary herself has done this to any of her persistent fans. The questions Mr Henshaw puts to Leigh are things like "Who are your friends?", when Leigh is all too aware he hasn't got any, and "What bothers you?", when what is actually bothering Leigh is the fact that his dad has left home because he prefers long-distance trucking to Leigh's mum – or "mom" I should say because we are on the West Coast.

As Leigh becomes more fluent, he reveals more about himself. Then he starts writing a journal addressed to "Dear Mr Pretend Hen-

shaw" where he can really get going on the soul baring. It seems petty to castigate Cleary for this overload of stylistic devices, and for the boy's unlikely literary ability because the book reads well, and so naturally that words like "contrived" and "unrealistic" seem inappropriate.

Over the years Cleary has developed a reputation for writing sympathetically about unhappy or difficult children. She seems to know the unexpected channels of expression unhappiness sometimes chooses. Here Leigh Botts is obsessed with the person who steals the good bits out of his school lunch box, centering on the unknown thief all his resentment against his dad. Then Dad manages to lose Leigh's adored dog on the freeway in arctic conditions. At his lowest ebb, Leigh is at last able to unlock the hatred he feels for his father, admit his loneliness, and begin to look constructively at his life. He contrives a burglar alarm for the lunch box, and, though he never catches the thief, wins the respect of a school which had appeared not to notice him before.

Cleary's brand of pop psychology is a fine blend of sentimentality and case history. The freshness of her writing, its characteristic gleams of humour, and the lightly washed West Coast backdrop, lift it above the banal. The way Leigh's self-pity is tackled is admirable; it isn't shirked but it isn't ever boring either. *Dear Mr Henshaw* is a likeable book. And, as a bonus, it provides a new perspective on long-distance trucking.

Warm collations

Jennifer Moody

ELEANOR SPENCE
The Left Overs
110pp. Methuen. £9.95.
0454 00284 X

"Left-overs make very good meals" says Auntie Bill, the local authority house-mother to her eldest ward, Drew. A questionable statement since a meal from left-overs depends more than most upon the skill of the cook. It is the reader's good fortune that Eleanor Spence is an excellent book cook. Her ingredients are a group of four children in care, a house-mother and an uncertain future; from them she concocts a satisfying and nourishing dish.

Drew (for Andrew), James, Jasmine and Straw (for Donna), in the care of the local authority for a variety of reasons, are looked after by Auntie Bill in a rambling old house which is now in the path of a projected fly-over. Eleven-year-old Drew, motherless and with a professional soldier as father, is responsible and concerned beyond his years; he decides to take a hand himself in order to prevent the break-up of the group of children. He and Jasmine devise a two-fold policy: to advertise their plight directly to the outside world, and to improve themselves in order to be more attractive to a potential foster parent. Self-improvement for Jasmine means trying to catch the limelight, for Drew being smarter, cleaner and more helpful, and for James losing weight (although James, a cheerful soul, sees no need to improve himself at all and protests as he is deprived of ice cream and rice pudding). Straw is too young and insecure to be brought into the plan at all. A card is placed in a tobaccoist's window, a placard is displayed from the audience of a popular television chat show, with little useful outcome. Then Drew writes to the parents of James and Jasmine, both of whom are as a result returned to their families. The group is broken up; Straw goes with Auntie Bill to a home in the country and Drew starts at a residential home for adolescent boys. Only on the very last page do we learn that James is Aboriginal, Jasmine half-Chinese and Straw retarded.

Eleanor Spence is born and bred Australian, and her novel is set firmly in that country. Once the reader has surmounted the mild surprise of a summer holiday centred on Christmas and approaching autumn in January, the bracing lack of sentimentality that we associate with Australia blends well with the potential pain of the subject. What could so easily be a maudlin and sentimental novel, is a brisk, entertaining and understanding work. By appearing to have made no effort to do so, the author has succeeded in moving us.

Paperbacks in brief

NAOMI LEWIS *Hare and Badger Go To Town*. Illustrated by Tony Ross. 0 907144 39 X. PATRICK KINMONTH *Mr Potter's Pigeon*. Illustrated by Reg Cartwright. 0 907144 37 3. COLIN McNAUGHTON *King Norn the Wiser*. 0 907144 34 9. JANOSCH *See you in the morning*. 0 907144 40 3. TONY ROSS *The Greedy Little Cobbler*. 0 907144 36 5. Methuen. £1.50 each. □ The most recent books in Methuen's small-format picture books, "Pocket Bears", continue the eclectic editorial policy and high standard of production of the first titles in the series. The books reflect a wide range of styles from the delicate to the broadly humorous.

GERALD ROSS *The Tiger-skin Rug*. Puffin. £1.25. 0 14 050323 4. □ First published in 1979. Highly coloured, slightly grotesque illustrations decorate the unlikely story of a tiger who pretends to be a rug in a Rajah's palace, foils some robbers and lives happily ever after.

PANDORA OLMFIELD *The Princess Well-I-May*. Illustrated by Glensy Ambrus. Hodder and

Stoughton. £1.50. 0 340 33200 X. □ First published 1979. The indecisive heroine rejects the proposal of Jon the shepherd boy in rhyming couplets, insisting that he perform certain tasks first. Jon does everything with *éclat*, then sensibly marries someone else.

Seeing and Doing. 112pp. Methuen. £2.50. 0 423 00850 1. □ First published in 1977. A strongly recommended reissue of the collection of stories and poems chosen to complement the long-running Thames Television series of the same name. The anthology, which is aimed at the very young, comes with musical examples and pictures by Diane Elson. The verse ranges from A. A. Milne to Woody Guthrie.

MERVYN PEAKE *A Book of Nonsense* 91pp. Penguin. £1.50. 0 14 006867 8. □ First published in 1972. A slim collection of twenty-nine of Peake's nonsense rhymes. Including "The Dwarf of Battersea" and "Aunts and Uncles" with illustrations by the author and an introduction by Maevie Gilmore.

Proofs of authenticity

Robert Irwin

DENYS JOHNSON-DAVIS (Translator)

Arabic Short Stories

173pp. Quartet Books. £6.95.

07043 23672

ALIFA RIFAAT

Distant View of Minaret and other stories

Translated by Denys Johnson-Davies

116pp. Quartet Books. £6.95.

07043 24016

"It's six in America. They're getting up now, while the sun is setting in Burma", the watchmaker tells the narrator of Muhammad Khudayir's "Clocks like Horses", in an enigmatic half echo of Sir Thomas Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus* ("The Huntsmen are up in America, and they are already past their first sleep in Persia"). In the small part of Fao at the head of the Gulf, the rhythms of time are determined by the hooves of horses, the fall of waves and the chiming of clocks. The relativity of time is suggested both by a certain circularity in the story's structure and by the reappearance of the Ottoman and British imperial past in the harbour's present. The watchmaker reminisces about the great days of the horse trade in the Gulf and the fate of a sorcerer from Muscat. *Arabic Short Stories* would be worth buying for the sake of this richly textured story alone.

Khudayir is an Iraqi. (His hardly less remarkable "The Marsh God" has appeared in an earlier anthology, *Modern Arab Stories*, published by the Iraqi Cultural Centre in London.) The twenty-five stories Denys Johnson-Davies has selected to translate – and trans-

lated very well – are drawn from all over the Arab world, though, as in other similar anthologies the Egyptian presence is noteworthy both for its quantity and its quality.

According to the blurb "No book about the Arabs – and no product of Western fiction – can give the reader such an authentic picture as is provided by these stories written by Arabs for Arabs." Perhaps. Some decades ago, Jorge Luis Borges in an essay, "The Argentine Writer and Tradition", arguing against the excessive use of local colour in Latin American fiction, eccentrically sought to clinch his case by pointing out that there are no camels in the Koran. This was the surest proof of its authenticity, for a faker, in the manner of Ossian, would have made sure that there were plenty of references to camels. As it happens, no camels in the Koran is one of Borges's teasing inventions: there are quite a number of them and one of the chapters of the Koran bears the title "The Camel". By the same profoundly ambiguous token, had an anthology of Western fiction about the Arabs been compiled, including perhaps Lawrence Durrell and Borges himself, the traditional and enjoyable exotic props would have been paraded – opium smokers, qat chewers, oriental diviners, Djinn, bedouin vengeance, the menacing desert and sinister but desirable veiled women.

In fact, Abdul Wali's narrator chews qat in a state of sexual expectancy. Taher's beggar is an opium addict, Kassem's Sheikh of the *mandal* uses divination by water in an ill-fated attempt to indict a thief, Tamer's drunkard has an encounter which is both dreamlike and sordid with the King of the Djinn masquerading as a talking sheep, Gorgy's construction site en-

gineer falls prey to bedouin vengeance, and Kouni's city dweller lost in "the drumming sands" survives and in surviving learns that the sun and the nomads are not the only killers in the desert. As for women – Abdul Wali's qat chewer is a prisoner of drugged desire, just leads Sharouni's protagonist to "the awe inspiring female body" of an older woman and the outcome of lust is murder, and Kouni's desert is like a dangerous woman who has to be wooed before she will disclose herself. Chukri's narrator is "angry at this human hunger that does not cease till death". In Tayeb Salih's superb "Cypriot Man", a meditation on the linked vulgarities of Western culture, sexual desire and death, a particularly strong relationship is established between the latter two. Barrada's *flâneur*, caught between the traditional Arab world and the new, ruefully finds "just renewing itself through the vibrations of the rounded and curved portions of women's bodies".

Common to many, if not most, of the stories, and generally absent from the more buoyant fantasies of Durrell and Borges, is a sense of mingled futility and fatality, of waiting for death – or as the title of Barrada's story has it, of living "Life by Installments". The wasted empty years are as oyster-shells without pearls in Kanafani's sombre "The Slave Fort". And, despite the superficial closeness of family bonds and street neighbourhoods, a sense of individual isolation is pervasive. The same is true of Alifa Rifaat's collection *Distant View of a Minaret*. These are stories of futility, isolation and unsatisfied desire. However, whereas in the stories told by the men, unsatisfied desires lead them to woman, the lure and the

danger, in Rifaat's perception of the world, man brings to woman only the promise of marriage and the sexually unsatisfying years that follow from it.

In Rifaat's world what a woman can do and, indeed, who she is determined by men and relationships between men. The men are not mysterious, just unsatisfactory. But Rifaat is no feminist. In "Bahiyya's Eyes", Bahiyya asserts "a woman without a man was like a fish out of water among the people" (echoing ironically the feminist slogan, "a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle"). In "The Kite" an inner voice tells the widow that "God has decreed that you are left alone in this world, in order to prepare yourself for leaving it", but the widow decides to marry nevertheless. A man shall lead her in the prayer.

Common to both collections of stories is the pervasiveness of religious language and liturgical reference. Prayers are like "punctuation marks" that divide up and give meaning to life. References to God and his purposes provide the common conversational stock change, and rhetoric at its most eloquent emulates the rhythms of the Koran. Yet though religiosity is pervasive, religion does not seem central. "Wealth and children are among the ornaments of this world" and "Strength is from Allah" are among the pieties, but in Rifaat's "My World of the Unknown" a frustrated woman ignores conventional religion and abandons conventional values in favour of intercourse with a phallically shaped female djinn. "There are many mysteries in life, unseen powers in the universe, worlds other than our own, hidden links and radiations that draw creatures together. . . ."

science-fiction satirists, Stanislaw Lem or Robertheckley.

Pohl's conceit, as his title suggests, is of a world afflicted by abundance. Consumption is a duty and sharp-eyed robots maintain vigilance over human beings sinking in surfeit. The idea has comic possibilities and *Midas World* provides some good moments: a glad-handing Italian-Irish-American politician is flummoxed when he has to deal with a robot electorate; robots are assigned to low-life social roles – mugger (of robots only), alcoholic, crippled beggar – which human beings find colourful but are not prepared to play themselves. But the brush is always a broad one, and, overall, *Midas World* feels somewhat unfocused.

Perhaps the problem is that the book has been developed out of pieces written over the last thirty years, and, in that time, American society has changed almost out of recognition; a moving target is always more difficult to hit.

Where *Orbitville Departure* is a fairly stereotyped version of the metaphysical adventure yarn, *Midas World* draws on an equally traditional model, satire by inversion. Philip K. Dick's *Counterlock World* is one example that comes to mind, but, clearly, *Midas World*'s first ancestor is Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*. Unfortunately, it does not have either the bite which makes *Erewhon* so disturbing, nor the manic inventiveness of the best modern

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Self-revelation and the self revealed

Jennifer Uglow

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

Journal

Edited by J. Middleton Murry

256pp. New York: Ecco Press. \$6.95.

088001 0231

Short Stories

Edited by J. Middleton Murry

688pp. New York: Ecco Press. \$11.95.

088001 0258

Short Stories

Edited by Claire Tomalin

267pp. Dent. £2.50.

046001 1300

Reading the 1927 version of Katherine Mansfield's *Journal* edited by Murry four years after his wife's death, in conjunction with the new Everyman *Short Stories*, is a lesson in the making and unmaking of a literary myth. Across the years Middleton Murry's Katherine, the delicate genius whose search for truth was intensified by a desperate awareness of mortality, confronts Claire Tomalin's Katherine, a "tough, adventurous, humorous, observant colonial girl, hard on others and hard on herself." Between the two lies half a century of collections, criticism, biography, memoir, and endless argument.

For Ecco Press, however, these fifty-odd years might never have passed. These reissues of the *Journal* and the *Short Stories* are to be welcomed, but they arrive unaccompanied by any new critical, bibliographical or biographical information and with no new introductions which might set Murry's prefaces in context. In the case of the *Journal*, in particular, this is lazy publishing carried almost to the point of irresponsibility. The cover copy is clearly directed at readers who are not Mansfield devotees, and the implication is that this is "the" *Journal*, a suggestion reinforced by the inclusion of a page which lists Murry's editions of the poems, stories, reviews, "scrapbook" and letters which appeared between 1924 and 1951. Yet in 1954, partly in response to the biography, Murry published a very different, vastly expanded "definitive edition" of the *Journal*, explaining how even this was selected from a far greater body of papers, including four diaries, over thirty notebooks and 100 loose sheets.

The 1927 version of the *Journal* censures aspects of Katherine Mansfield which were integral to her nature and her work. There is hardly a glimpse of the early iconoclastic spirit, of the woman whom Leonard Woolf found to be "wry, gay, cynical, amoral, ribald, witty". This is the writer whom Claire Tomalin reinstates in her detailed and lively introduction. But does the existence of another "definitive edition", or a rounder, more complex view of Mansfield's character, somehow invalidate our reading of the first *Journal*?

Huge questions hover about what kind of truth any published journal offers or what kind of art it amounts to. Even at its most spontaneous it is often a staged self-revelation, especially in the case of a writer who (notoriously) revelled in, indeed depended on, "impersonation" in life as in her fiction. One thing of Beryl Fairfield in "Prelude" whose disgust at the false self she detects in her letter and her mirror poses will, one feels, never totally destroy her enjoyment of her own act. "If I was outside the window and looked in and saw myself I really would be rather struck," Murry's editing presents the Katherine he chose to see, through one particular window. But the resulting portrait is not to much partially true as true to a part of her, as she was in the last seven years of her life, for live of which she was seriously ill. Moments of health and calm, achieved more often through memory or through exercises in fiction than through immediate experience, come to seem like rare gifts. The *Journal* is a self-pitying document, but wryly, angrily so. And while one's first impression is of a sexually immersed in sight and sound and touch – a pale face and black hair, a red silk curtain, the delicate smell of "grey wood", the flowering birch trees – there are always undercurrents of reflection, even horror. She is more aware of her own face looking than the widest beach. "Thinking of a forest of wild birds, or of the birds turned even here," this is a woman who knows, as there is her

stories, "If I try to find things lovely, I turn pretty-pretty. And at the same time I am so frightened of writing mockery for satire that my pen hovers and won't settle."

The *Journal* is a safety-valve for feelings, a storehouse for ideas and impressions, a repository of unspoken thoughts, unsent letters and unwanted dreams. In her notebooks her fluency never failed, for this type of writing is process as opposed to the stasis of the finished stories. It is a means of channelling shock and disbelief at her brother's death in 1915 ("Dearest heart I know you are there, and I live with you and I will write for you") into the poignant reminiscences, notes for the late New Zealand stories. It also helped her to live with her own approaching death, and to turn her back on the people who tied her to life, "Ah, I feel a little calmer already to be writing. Thank God for writing. I am so terrified of what I am going to do."

The most telling note which Murry caught in 1927 is not in the occasional lyrical whimsy, "the wind touches the harp – like trees, shakes little jets of music", or in the sharp vignettes of Mediterranean villas or Fulham flats, but in the constant undercurrent of throbbing, tumbling impatience. Mansfield is impatient with landladies, with officials, with friends, with doctors, with Murry himself and – in many comic, remorseful entries which are pale reflections of the violent passages which were omitted – with the devoutly devoted "L.M.". She is supremely impatient with herself, her temper, her illness, her "laziness", her slowness: "Look at the stories that wait and wait just on the threshold." Yet a story once finished is immediately unsatisfactory, and time is a cruel editor.

It's always a kind of race to get in as much as one can before it disappears . . . The only occasion when I ever felt at leisure was while writing *The Daughters of the Late Colonel*. And at the end I was so terribly unhappy that I wrote as fast as possible for fear of dying before the story was sent.

The *Short Stories*, published in 1937, are an impressive record of how much she did "get in" before her death at the age of thirty-four; the contents of the three collections published during her lifetime, and the two compilations edited by Murry are arranged in roughly chronological order, followed by fifteen unfinished pieces. The arrangement displays her growing virtuosity: the gradual exclusion of explicit motivation and increasing reliance on dialogue, action, symbolic detail to carry meaning; greater ease at sliding the point of narration in and out of different consciousnesses and satire relaxing into a pervasive, pointed comedy. But equally striking is the thematic continuity. The first two stories here, "The Tiredness of Rosabel" and "How Pearl Buttons was Kidnapped" (a typical wild swerve between assured irony and sentimental whimsy), read like a map of future territory; a woman alone, travelling, in unfriendly rooms, feeding off fantasy, assured she is "different" from others; a child whisked from a familiar house into a landscape where sea and earth mix, spying with fascinated incomprehension on the liberating yet confining adult world.

The twenty-one stories in the Everyman selection are also arranged chronologically and form a group at once representative and unexpected. Many illustrate Mansfield's versatility and the directions her art could have taken; the cartoon-like sharpness of "Frau Brechenmacher attends a wedding"; the brooding tales of the New Zealand backblocks, "Mills" and "The Woman at the Store", with their hysterical, inarticulate protagonists; the documentary quality of the quasi-autobiographical "Indecent Journey", the "eeriness" as Tomalin accurately puts it, of the male narrator's flat voice in "A Married Man's Story", unveiling the childhood privation behind adult hypocrisy. Less well known stories give a strong sense of her developing art and show familiar set-pieces, like the fine New Zealand stories of 1921, in a new light. The collection ends with a surprise, not "The Fly" or "The Canary", which are rejected as "crying their symbolism too loudly", but "The Honeymoon", a late sketch of a favourite subject, the final impossibility of bridging the gulf between individuals, however close they seem.

Claire Tomalin's selection encompasses the impudence and roughness as well as the delicacy of Mansfield's writing, and this emphasizes the fact that whether in "Honeymoon", in the

Burnell stories, or the earlier "A Birthday", we laugh openly only at the men, active, self-satisfied, just momentarily thrown off balance, while the women rarely escape pathos. For the comedy is one based on misinterpretation, and often on the misreading of sexual signals, which always trembles between farce and tragedy. Both qualities are present in Beryl's ludicrously painful experience at the end of "At the Bay".

"You are vile, vile," said she. "Then why in God's name did you come", stammered Harry Kember. Nobody answered him. A cloud, small, serene, floated across the moon. In that moment of darkness the sea sounded deep, troubled. Then the cloud sailed away and the sound of the sea was a vague murmur as though it waked out out of a dark dream. All was still.

Katherine Mansfield uses the physical world to create an extra, unique dimension. Again and again, surroundings acquire a life of their own which both blends with and comments on a state of mind: Bertha Young watching her dining table "melt in the dusky light" and the blue bowl "float in the air"; Linda Burnell tracing the poppy on the wallpaper and feeling the stem "hairy like a gooseberry bush"; Josephine and Constantia in terror lest the late Colonel is lurking in the drawer with his handkerchiefs, while a blind flies up as "a little tassel tapped as if trying to get free". The very bodies of her women seem to become the medium of the story; excited, exhausted by childbirth, yearning, dancing, running or "soaped, smacked and sprayed and thrown in a cold water tank". Borders melt perpetually between external and internal landscapes, and between physical, emotional and moral realms. The stories are imbued with the uncertainty, the untrustworthiness, the through-the-looking-glass quality of experience. They are full of sudden revelations of change, of alternative realities, glimpses through windows, intuitions of age, suffering, pain beneath brilliant surfaces. The everyday world reassembles itself, "all is still" after Beryl's crisis, but in her garden, as in the world of the *Journal* where the birds might turn "even here", the tall flowering fuschia has "a little pit of darkness beneath".

Thomas Jackson Rice's *D. H. Lawrence: A Guide to Research* (484pp. Godard, \$41.00 8240 91272) is a selective annotated bibliography of works by and about D. H. Lawrence. It consists of three parts: the first, or primary bibliography, contains separate bibliographies of Lawrence's major publications, collections and editions of his works and of his letters; the second part, or secondary bibliography, includes more than 2,200 annotated bibliographies of bibliographical, biographical and critical publications concerning Lawrence; part three, appendices and indexes, includes an extensive checklist of foreign language publications on Lawrence.

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John Lucas's *Romanticism to Modern Literature: Essays and Ideas of Culture 1750-1900* was published in 1982.

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Stuart Piggott's *The Earliest Wheeled Transport* was published last year.

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P. J. Rhodes's *Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaeon Politeia* was published in 1981.

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J. O. Urison's books include *Berkeley*, 1982.

Felipe Verga was responsible for the 1983 Edinburgh Festival's *Vienne 1900* exhibition.

Correction: On December 30, 1983, it was wrongly stated that Arthur Calder-Marshall's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* would be appearing shortly. Mr Calder-Marshall wished us to say that he is withholding publication of the book indefinitely.

Counterclock worlds

Michael Rosen

BOB SHAW

Orbitville Departure

166pp. Gollancz. £7.95.

0375 033460

FREDERIK POHL

Midas World

276pp. Gollancz. £7.95.

0375 033746

It may seem odd to call science-fiction traditional but, in their different ways, both Bob Shaw's *Orbitville Departure* and Frederik Pohl's *Midas World* take the reader back to a time of lost innocence, before science-fiction found its way into the adult world of moral ambiguity and literary self-doubt. The genre certainties of *Orbitville Departure* – its cardboard characters, mangle-wand attitude to technology, and sociological nativity – make it a book which is never far from cliché. But they also give it a certain strength: a vigorous, uncluttered narrative which is both pacy and tense.

Orbitville Departure is a sequel to Shaw's well-regarded *Orbitville* (the Big O), its inhabitants call it; apparently without irony) is the ultimate open prairie, a surprisingly huge, habitable world which englobes an entire star. Where *Orbitville* recounted the story of its discovery, *Orbitville Departure* takes up the question which the earlier novel left hanging: how did *Orbitville* get there in the first place?

The answer is presented through the career of the book's thoroughly unsympathetic hero, Garry Dallen, an obsessive, tough-guy law enforcer. Dallen's possessive attitude towards his wife, Cona, and his son, Mike, is typical of him. One suspects that it would only be a matter of time before Dallen drove Cona to divorce and Mike to a nervous breakdown. But before the family's problems can come to a head, Cona and Mike have their minds wiped back to *tabula rasa* by a criminal with a "Ludicrous Special" – a vicious weapon used chiefly for the elimination of over-inquisitive computers.

Though Cona is now completely infatigable, Dallen finds his new role hard to take. Happy childhood is not his style and Cona's excursions into polymorphous perverseness sexually obviously distress him. So it is with something like relief that he turns to more

traditional male function and sets off in search of revenge. The rest of the book follows Dallen as his pursuit takes him towards Orbitville itself and to an ever-more-dizzying series of revelations of superhuman purpose. On the way he meets Silvia London, an artist, who has used a third of a million pieces of glass making a mosaic representation of a "Gott-McPherson cosmos". The cosmology behind her art comes from her physicist husband; he, however, quickly "becomes disincarnate" in the cause of science, an event which, apart from leaving the way conveniently clear for Dallen, verifies the paradigmatic physics on which the book's dénouement depends.

This problem of sustaining sympathy with *Orbitville Departure* – difficult enough with the obnoxious Dallen as its central figure – now becomes acute. Shaw asks the reader to accept a cosmology of "mindons" and "gravitons", of parallel universes interacting through mind-

A woman of words

Laura Marcus

LISA ZEIDNER

Alexandra Freed

288pp. Cape. £8.95.

0224 021583

"Myselfness was, in fact, something I'd had quite enough of," the eponymous heroine of Lisa Zeidner's novel declares, as she contemplates the imminence of her third decade and the uncertainty of her future. Her anxieties are understandable, for what is a graduate of the pre-generation to do? Alexandra spends the months of her unemployment, when she's not consulting the "I-Ching", having ideas, the routes of association to which are obscure enough to suggest less the quirky brilliance that's intended than a borderline psychosis. "The Freed brain", the pride of its owner as she lovingly charts its twists and turns, is as fascinating phenomenon than Alexandra Freed, novel or narrator, would have us believe.

When Alexandra isn't exploring the meaning regions of her "inner landscape", she talks and this leads to nothing so much as a great longing for a bit of Fleming-esque laconism. To be

fair, everyone around Alex talks a great deal too, especially her beloved brother Theo, who has meaningful affairs with her friends, and is also very clever, as is proved by his propensity for uttering lengthy disquisitions on the psychology of the Chinese without being asked. But Alexandra is a self-professed "woman of words", to the point where she wisecracks even while being raped in a park in Philadelphia: "Given the importance of my body, I think I should get a last cigarette."

The rapist is, in fact, an eligible young architect, with whom Alex embarks upon an affair, once the revelation of his unhappy past has absolved him from blame. After her period of abstinence from men, sex with Walter, the rampant architect, is ecstatic, although it doesn't stop Alexandra talking nor curb her desire for cigarettes. For even more pressing than the concerns of career, money, men, the pros and cons of marriage, or the global problems caused by the capitalist economy for which Alexandra and her friends spare passing attention, is the great unresolved tobacco debate: to smoke or not to smoke. Smoking cuts down the time available on this earth in which to be clever, not smoking induces nicotine withdrawal symptoms, that contemporary version of existential angst. Walter has problems

with withdrawal too, and his disregard for Alex's reproductive potentialities finally reveals him to be the creep she should have known he was all along. But then, isn't that the modern woman's dilemma where men are concerned: can't live with them, can't live without them?

Riding atop all this silliness is a spurious use of "modernist" literary devices that may get the novel a degree of serious critical attention. *Alexandra Freed* has a number of dogs running around, or being run over, within it, the symbolic resonances of which escaped this reader. More predictable are the means by which the author makes it known that she knows that art is an artifact. The obligatory reference to the literary medium within the literary text comes this time upon the photograph. Alexandra freezes-frames the scenes around her, runs them through in her head, tries to freeze-frames from time by turning event into tableau. All of which leads one to wonder why all that talk was necessary, when the novel could have been reduced so expressively to a simple visual image: a fashionably sparse apartment, a man, and a woman within it, the woman falling the cigarette in hand, a cartoon bubble above her head, inside the bubble the words "Lies to me."

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